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ABSTRACT

Firsthand accounts by refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, telling how they escaped from Indochina and how they are adjusting to life in Canada (and particularly Nova Scotia), form the greater part of this book. Most of the accounts are by Vietnamese. Information is also provided on the history of the Canadian refugee program, and on the history and culture of Indochina as a whole and of the three individual countries. A brief assessment of the refugee program's achievements and of the current refugee situation is also given. (CMG)

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Indochinese Refugee Experience

ED240186

Refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia

in Nova Scotia

Researched by: Xuong Ngo

Edited by: Marcel Guay

MULTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF NOVA SCOTIA
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Refugees or Heroes?

In Vietnamese ty means to escape, nan means disaster and together they mean refugee, ty nan. A ty nan is a responsible person in heroic flight, not a victim seeking refuge. In Khmer, the language spoken in Cambodia, (Kampuchea) tuyn peer cloon means people who run away from their country, or self-imposed exiles. A Cambodian tuyn peer cloon is an escapee from political difficulties. In contrast, a Laotian opayop is someone forced out of a native land against the individual's will. The term opayop doesn't suggest helplessness or that one has found a new home in the land of refuge. In their own terms, the so-called Boat People from Indochina who came to Nova Scotia in 1979-1980 were heroically fleeing at the risk of their lives and were stepping totally into the unknown, with no guarantees that their country of refuge would become a new home.

The English term "refugee" has a totally different value system attached to it than any of these Indochinese terms because it imples or includes helplessness and dependence on the good will of the citizens of a country of refuge. This English meaning of the term refugee has been influential in establishing the accepted meaning of refugee in the United Nations (U.N.).

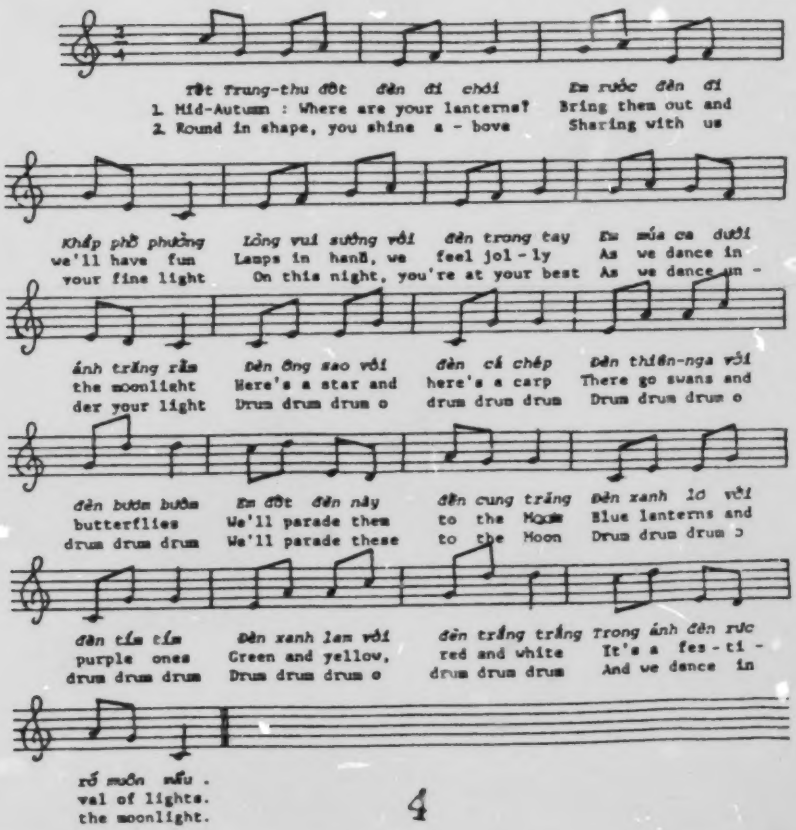
The current U.N. definition of a refugee is a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, or belonging to a particular social or political group and who does not have a country of nationality or who is outside of his country of origin. and fears to return. * (United Nations, Refugee Convention, (1951), Protocol, (1967), Article 1A (1))

Canada tends to accept the U.N. definition, however, the Canadian definition of a refugee is much broader due to political interpretations by the Canadian government.

As established in the 1976 Canadian Immigration Act, any group can obtain refugee status for humanitarian reasons and the need to qualify under the U.N. definition completely, was eliminated in December, 1977. *(Canada and the Indochinese Refugees, Howard Adelman, L.A. Weigl Educational Associates Ltd., Regina, 1982, p 11)

LAMP PARADE

Lời tiếng Anh của NGUYỄN NGỌC BÍCH
Hội Văn Hóa Việt Nam Tại Bắc Mỹ phổ biến
nhân Tết Trung Thu Bính Thìn



Foreword

Steve Panais, President of the Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia

For the last few years, Nova Scotian have helped resettle more than one thousand refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. These people came from an area that has known war for decades and unrest for centuries.

In 1981 The Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia initiated the project "Getting to Know the Indochinese", a program which included a slide tape presentation, booklets and school and community workshops to introduce the Indochinese culture to Nova Scotians. As well, an oral history collection of the refugees' experience was begun. During the past months Mr. Xuong Ngo had the chance to talk with the people and record their impressions, their memories, their hopes and fears as they recalled their experience of flight and eventual resettlement. They expressed their thoughts freely to him, in their own language. This book is a translation of their stories.

On behalf of the Indochinese refugees, I would like to invite Nova Scotians to read these personal histories so that we may better understand each other's pasts.

Indochinese Refugee Experience and the slide-presentation were made possible by grants from the Canada Employment and Immigration Commision, the Department of Secretary of State, and the provincial Department of Culture Recreation and Fitness which we acknowledge with appreciation.

Indochinese Refugee Experience is also dedicated to many individuals who have been generous in sharing their experiences. I can not mention each one here but I extend a sincere thank you to each one.

INDEX

Refugees or Heroes? ii
Foreword iv

Introduction 1
Indochina, an historical background 7

CAMBODIA 15
One Million People 18

LAOS 21
In a refugee camp for two years 27
I am still a Laotion 30
Three-mile swim to freedom 34

VIETNAM 38
Together in a new land 42
We had no choice 44
It was a dangerous escape 46
The people here helped me 48
We shall be grateful 54
The snow! How beautiful it was 57
The day we married ... the communists took over. 59
A Russian ship... towed us back to Vietnam 70
Our ancestors' graves are there 72
Kim Van Kieu 75
We keep our traditions 79
A long nightmare 81
To run away was dangerous 86
Our parents didn't know of our escape 88
Recipes 91
I feel I am living a new life 97
This is a good place to live 100
Thai Pirates 102
We still worship our ancestors 104
Businessmen lived with terror 106
Xia and Li are great virtue 110
I teach my grandparents English 116
I will work to sponsor my relatives 118
Conclusion 121
Bibliography 124

CHINA
BURMA
Hanoi
Haiphong
Hong Kong
Hainan
Vientiane
LAOS
THAILAND
Da Nang
Bangkok
VIETNAM
PHILIPPINES
KAMPUCHEA
SOUTH CHINA SEA
Phnom Penh
Saigon
Manila
MALAYSIA
Singapore
INDONESIA
BORNEO
Sumatra

Introduction

Marcel Guay, Editor

The number of refugees to reach Canada from Indochina (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, which is now Kampuchea) was about 60,000 during 1979-1980. About 1,000 of these were placed in Nova Scotia. The highest concentrations of Indochinese refugees are in Halifax-Dartmouth (407), Truro (62), Kentville (46), and Sydney (35), the rest are individuals or small groups placed throughout the province.

Canadian policy for accepting refugees changed dramatically in reaction to events in Indochina. When the first small boats of escapees left Vietnam in 1976, Canadians agreed to accept 108 persons immediately and a total of 400 persons for 1977. Later, that same year it was decided to increase Canada's commitment to 50 families per month due to the severity of the problem of homeless people coming out of Indochina. In early 1978, Canada agreed to increase this number to include an additional 20 families from refugee camps in Thailand.

In December, 1978, the international press began to report that corrupt Vietnamese officials were allowing the "rich" ethnic Chinese to buy their way out of Indochina and the news centered around the plight of the ship Hai Hong. Although it had been going on for some time, the traffic in human lives had become news only when the Hai Hong arrived in Hong Kong Dec. 19, 1978 with 3,318 persons on board, none of whom had arranged to immigrate to any country of the world before leaving Vietnam. Canada immediately agreed to take 608 of these people. The events leading up to the Hai Hong incident resulted in an increasing Canadian commitment to taking more Indochinese refugees. In 1978, the total number of refugees from all parts of the world to be accepted by Canada was set at 10,000 by Cabinet which also decided that in view of the situation in Indochina, a further

2,000 spaces would be made available for refugees from that region, which brought the total up to 7,000.

However, later in 1978, Hanoi introduced currency changes to eliminate concentrations of wealth in Vietnam. It also nationalized small businesses without compensation, and forced dispossessed businessmen, community leaders, soldiers and the like from the Saigon regime to relocate onto New Economic Zones where they were forced to hack farms out of the jungle. This treatment brought out resistence in the Vietnamese and existing underground escape routes of Vietnam flourished. The Vietnamese government officially condoned corruption of their agents by allowing bribery and head taxes to increase government coffers. The usual price to leave the country was set at 10 to 12 taels of gold, one tael equals about $350 U.S. in the currency of that time.

By the end of June 1978, more than 290,000 refugees had fled Vietnam and, in Canada, the newly elected Conservative government responded by increasing the Indochinese refugee quota another 1,000, bringing the new total for 1978 to 8,000.

At that time the Conservative government made an innovation in refugee policy by encouraging the concept of private sponsorships. It announced a target number of 4,000 persons to be brought into Canada by private groups in addition to the agreed to 8,000 government sponsorships.

This was enthusiastically greeted by the Canadian public, and sponsoring groups sprang up all over the country. One month later, the target figure for refugees from Indochina was raised to 21,000 private sponsorships and the government pledged to match that number in government sponsorships over and above the 8,000 refugees originally planned, bringing the total number of refugees allowed into Canada up to at least 50,000. The government assumed that it would take one year for private sponsors to take in 21,000 refugees.

The private sponsorship goal was reached in only four months. At this point, the Conservative government backed out of the agreement and decided not to match each private sponsorship with a government one and to put a ceiling on the total refugees let into Canada at 50,000. The private groups paid no heed and the number of refugees under their care reached 35,000 by the end of 1979. The government had only 12,000.

The Conservative government was defeated in February 1979 and the new Liberal government pledged to take in an additional 10,000 government-sponsored Indochinese refugees, but still not to match the number of private sponsorships.

By the end of 1980, the total number of Indochinese refugees in Canada was about 60,000, because private sponsorships had contunued to rise. It was the highest number of Indochinese refugees per capita taken in by any country in the world.

Indochinese refugees in Nova Scotia

July 1979	47
August	97
Sept.	112
Oct.	138
Nov.	249
Dec.	357
Feb.	434
March	514
April	694
May	735
July	926

(from The New Pioneers: Ethnicity and the Vietnamese Refugees in Nova Scotia, Mary Boyd, The Ethnic Heritage Series, International Education Centre, Halifax.)

Between 1975 and 1980 it is estimated that between 500,000 and 1 million refugees left Indochina. At the height of the evacuation, beginning in June 1979 and ending about one year later the mass media reported that as many as 200,000 refugee escapees had died in the attempt to

get out of Indochina. This figure seems to have originated at the Asian Relations Centre, Sophia University, Tokyo and was reported in their publication The Cry of the Indochinese, it seems without any verification*(Adleman p. 19).

Similarly, the number of drownings were estimated at about half of those who set out to sea. The actual or verified number of drowings (due to leaky boats, robbery by Thai pirates or storms) of those trying to escape Indochina are set at about 10 to 15 per cent or somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000.

EMPLOYMENT

Almost all Indochinese refugees took a six-month English as a second language course and about 20 per cent moved to other provinces to seek employment on completion. In the Halifax-Dartmouth area, the Indochinese were employed in restaurants, fish plants, sewing-shops and hotels. Most work in fields unrelated to their previous occupation. A former teacher works as a seamstress, a businessman works as a fish-cutter. After two years of being here, some finished an Industrial Training course and acquired jobs as technicians in drafting and other trades.

FAMILY

Family unification is still a major concern for many Indochinese families here because they have family members left behind in Vietnam and Laos. Many teenagers and young refugees still wish to bring their parents over, and wives wish to reunite with their husbands, although few families will be able to do so because of the obstacles they face. For instance, family members in Canada must prove the financial ability to support more people. Also family members in Vietnam often must wait for years to get exit Visas.

Whenever possible, the Indochinese have three generations living under one roof. Indochinese families in Canada are

presented with many new problems. Stress may develop as the family adapts to the way of life here. For instance, children quickly orient themselves towards their peers and they learn English more quickly than their parents. They become linguistic and cultural middlemen for their parents and this deepens the generation gap. Usually, age is respected in Indochinese culture and family responsibilities are carried by all, but this is difficult to maintain when the older generation is at a linguistic disadvantage.

LANGUAGE

Mother-tongue retention rate among adults is high but children acquire English skills at school and there is a tendency to use English to communicate between themselves. A diversity of languages and dialects are spoken by the Indochinese. Most ethnic Chinese speak their own dialect of Cantonese, Hainanese, Taoken, Mandarin and depending on the language of the country they came from: either Vietnamese or Laotian.

RELIGION

Most Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese practice home worshiping, with a few exceptions who set up shrines with ancestor images to the goddess of mercy. Many do not have a permanent shrine. But they do lay out food and burn incense sticks to show their remembrance. The special days that they observe worship include late-ancestor day, New Year, Mid-autumn festival, plus the first and middle of the month in the Chinese calendar.

Adapted from National Geographic Picture Atlas, 1979.

Indochina, an historical background

Marcel Guay, Editor

A blend of Indian and Chinese civilizations and a tension-filled flash point has developed over the last 2,000 years in the counties of Laos, Cambodia, (now Kampuchea) and Vietnam. The special cultural influences in the region have led to the acceptance of the term Indochina when referring to the three counties as a whole.

A distinct Viet civilization developed in north Vietnam early, but was dominated by the Chinese empire from 111 B.C to 939 A.D. This 1,000 years under Chinese control has had a lasting effect and is part of the reason that the Vietnamese do not have close ties with their most powerful neighbour, even to this day. South Vietnam was a separate entity and was ruled by either Cambodia or an ancient state which no longer exists, named Champa, until 939 A.D. when the North Vietnamese had defeated their Chinese overlords and began expanding south from the Red River Delta. Over the next 800 years they moved gradually south, defeated the Chann empire, settled between Saigon and Hue and had moved into the Mekong Delta by 1700. These years of liberation from the Chinese, Cambodians and Champas left lasting enmity between the races of the region and between north and south Vietnamese. In retaliation for the occupation of south Vietnam by Cambodia, the Vietnamese occupied most of east Cambodia in the 1800's while the Thais had pushed in from the west at the same time.

Prevously the Khmers, the dominant ethnic group in Cambodia, had established a kingdom from Laos to Malaysia and had built the famed city of Anghor Wat.

The Laos have had a much different history from their neighbours. Before the 1200's the original Laos were an ethnic group in China, but during that century, they began attacking the Cambodian empire and had a distinct country of their own for 600 years. By the 1800's, the little country

of Laos was dominated by Thailand.

European influences in Indochina began as early as 1535, when successive groups of English, Dutch and Portuguese traders stopped in the Bay of Danang. The first French colonists arrived in the 1600's and found Indochina to be a group of feudal states with an agricultural economic base and a society based on social order, Buddhism and Confucianism. In 1763, France lost its colonies of Canada and India to the British and, to keep its imperial economy going, made further inroads into Indochina.

In the mid-1800's, France colonized north Vietnam, then called Cochin Chine, and south Vietnam, then called Annam and Tongking. Cambodia was taken over in 1863 and Thailand, then called Siam, was added to French imperial domination in 1893.

The French developed coal, zinc and tin mining in north Vietnam and furthered agriculture in south Vietnam.

The development in the Indochinese economy brought large numbers of Chinese immigrants into Indochina in the late 1800's and early 1900's, although many ethnic Chinese had moved earlier. Most of the Chinese operated as traders, merchants and money lenders and they eventually gained control over the internal rice and sugar industries. The Chinese remained a distinct ethnic group and had some protection from the government in mainland China. In 1975 it is estimated that there were about 1.5 million Chinese in Vietnam, mostly in the south, and about 350,000 Chinese in Cambodia. In 1975 to 1980, after the communist takeover of Vietnam, these ethnic Chinese took the brunt of the communist expulsions and economic reforms.

The European influence was always resented by the Vietnamese. The first rebellions against the French began in 1833, and took the form of guerrilla attacks on French outposts. The campaign against the French was not continuous, but was steady and ended in defeat for the French in 1954.

During French rule of Indochina, Laos and Cambodia remained relatively peaceful and the Vietnamese carried the attacks agains the French essentially alone.

The communist movement in Vietnam started in 1930 and was led by Ho Chi Minh. The movement emphasized nationalism rather than social or economic reform or revolution and therefore easily gained popular support.

In the Second World War, France was defeated by Germany in 1940 and its colonies were controlled in the interests of Germany and Japan by the Nazi-supported Vichy government in France. Japan had managed to occupy most of China during this period and had allowed French control of Indochina until March, 1945 when it took over direct rule. The Vietnamese communists, or Viet Minh, fought an underground guerrilla war in Vietnam on the side of the U.S. and Chinese Nationalists against the Japanese.

When Japan surrendered to the U. S. August 10, 1945, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed Vietnam an independent country. Ho's revolutionaries, the Viet Minh, led the communist party, the Chi Minh, and were supported by the Chinese Communist Party, although that group did not have control of China at that time.

Ho's triumph was short lived because an agreement made before Japan's defeat, between European allies and the Chinese Nationalists, dealt Vietnam to Chinese occupation in the north, and British occupation in the south. The British helped the French re-establish control over its former colony and helped put down communist independence movements. The Chinese Nationalists took their opportunity of occupying north Vietnam to loot the already hard-pressed citizens in their control.

In 1949, Mao Tse Tungs' communists defeated the Chinese Nationalists in China and offered arms and sanctuary to Ho's troops. It was this ally that provided the main advantage and provided the turning point in the defeat of the French Foreign Legion in Vietnam.

In April 1954, a Geneva conference attempted to settle Indochina's problems by declaring Laos and Cambodia free states and dividing north and south Vietnam at the 17th Parallel. A control commission was set up to police Vietnam and keep north and south Vietnam separate entities. The control commission was made up of troops from Canada, Poland and India.

About 860,000 people fled north Vietnam and flooded into South Vietnam as a result of this agreement, while about 110,000 people streamed into North Vietnam from the south.

American aid aimed at keeping South Vietnam non-communist began as early as 1950 when the U.S. had found itself drawn into the war in Korea. Aid was given to the French until 1954 and then shifted to the South Vietnamese government when the French evacuated. By 1962, there were about 16,000 military advisors in South Vietnam. From then until former U.S. President, Richard Nixon, negotiated a cease-fire in 1973, 56,000 U.S. troops died in Vietnam and about $100 billion was spent on the war effort.

Two years after the U.S. troops began pulling out of Vietnam, Saigon and all of Vietnam was taken over by the communists, Viet Minh in the north and the Viet Cong in the south.

By that time defoiliants had destroyed about 20 per cent of Vietnamese farmland, 3 million people were unemployed and famine and hardship were common. Plus, there were 800,000 orphans, 1 million war widows, several hundred thousand prostitutes and drug addicts to deal with. As well, there were serious threats to public heath from malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy.

Cambodia had not been directly involved with the wars in Vietnam until 1970 when Ho's troops were attacked by U.S. troops and bombers in their Cambodian hiding places.

Although communist movements had developed in all three countries, the alignments of the three were totally different. The Vietnamese were politically and militarily allied to the U.S.S.R. and Soviet party lines, while the communists in Laos and Cambodia aligned themselves politically to the Chinese.

In 1975 all three countries had some form of communist government but the differences in ideology and a long disputed border between Vietnam and Cambodia led to yet another war. In December, 1978, Vietnam invaded Cambodia, overthrew the existing U.S. supported government and still maintains control today.

In 1977, the Vietnamese government decided to re-locate about 10 million people and to re-educate the South Vietnamese along communist party lines. The New Economic Zone program was started as a way to increase agricultural production, reduce unemployment, while at the same time re-locating millions of small businessmen, traders, civil servants, and anyone with power under the former South Vietnamese government. Since a good number of the posts mentioned had been held by the ethnic Chinese, the re-location and re-education programs were directly aimed at this group.

Re-education programs involved different levels of indoctrination for different social levels. Ordinary soldiers and citizens were placed in one-week programs. South Vietnamese troops up to the rank of captain were placed in ten day to one year programs with an additional one year of close surveillance. Senior officers, businessmen and politicians were placed in camps for indefinite periods of time.

As a result of these programs thousands of ethnic Chinese and people in Vietnam who could not adjust to the communist programs began to escape from the country.

In 1978, the Vietnamese government began an official program to evict the ethnic Chinese. About 80 per cent of the people who left Vietnam from 1978 to 1980 were ethnic

Chinese, the remainder were Vietnamese capitalists, landowners, middle class workers or disgruntled communists, some from north Vietnam.

The situation in Cambodia from 1975 to 1980 has been described as everything from "purification" to "genocide" depending on the source. Estimates on the number of deaths during this time vary from 1 million to 3 million, as a result of government policies by the Vietnamese supported Pol Pot regime. The Pol Pot forces evacuated every city in Cambodia following the victory of the Vietnamese in Cambodia. Everyone was forced out including the aged, women and children and even the sick, who were pushed down roads in their hospital beds.

The reason the Pol Pot regime had for this was that they wished to turn the Cambodian economy from a city-based capitalist system to a peasant economy. It was decided the new system would have no money, so that wealth could not be accumulated, no trade, so that no divisions in the social system could develop and therefore no cities.

Everyone judged not capable of fitting into the new system was killed. Every adult who had not joined the communist revolution before April 1975 was judged unfit and sentenced to death.

The complete halt to the Cambodian economy ordered by the government also resulted in a famine.

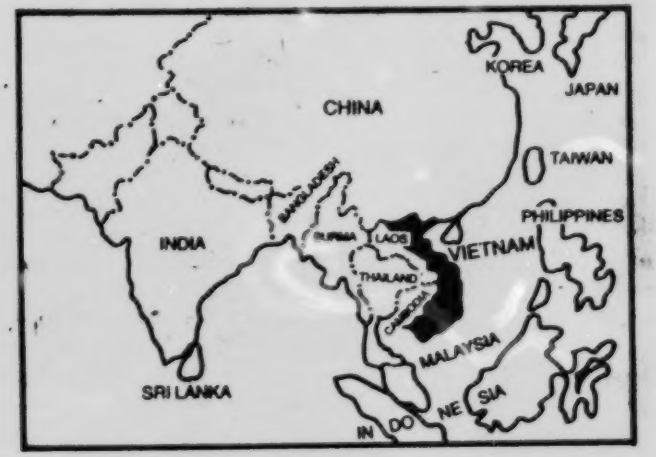
Laos had been involved in the Vietnam war much earlier. The 1954 Geneva agreement had allowed the Pathet Lao to settle in the northern part of Laos and the Khmer Rouge were cleared out. The Pathet Lao were able to continue fighting the U.S.-backed monarchy in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, eventually bringing about a new Geneva agreement which allowed them to share a coalition government with the monarchists and royal families of Laos. This coalition lasted until 1975.

That same year, intense U.S. bombing in Vietnam forced Viet Minh supply lines into Laos with the result that U.S. troops and bombers followed them. More U.S.

bombs were dropped on Laos than on Vietnam during the Vietnam war and it is estimated that about 25 million bombs were dropped on Vietnam. This rural warfare involving Pathet Lao against the Laos government forces and U.S. against the Vietnamese led by Ho resulted in a great number of displaced persons in Laos, and estimates go as high as about 200,000.

The Pathet Lao received guidance from the Viet Minh in Hanoi and when they gained control of the government in Laos in 1975, a great many of the Laotian middle class and upper class royalty fled the country into Thailand. Many of the middle class included ethnic Chinese.

Laos had a population of about 3.5 million in 1978. About 200,000 people fled the country between 1978 and 1980 and estimates are that about 40,000 died in the attempts to escape with an additional 60,000 imprisoned in re-education camps.



CAMBODIA

Ngo, Xuong

THE COUNTRY:

Cambodia is a small country, about 69,000 square miles with long borders on Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. It has a southwest seacost on the Gulf of Siam of the South China Sea. The climate of Cambodia is hot and humid with temperatures between 25 C and 35 C all year round in the lowlands. There are only two seasons: the hot and dry season and the monsoon. During the monsoon which runs from May to October a meter or more of rain falls every day. In 1973 the population of Cambodia was estimated at 7.8 million, 80 percent to 90 percent of whom are people of Khmer, with Vietnamese and Chinese in minority.

Cambodia is well known for its historic city, "Angkor Wat" constructed in the Golden Age or Anghor Period from 802 until 1432. This time saw a flourishing of art, architecture and learning. Anghor Wat, is the greatest symbol of the power, prestige and learning of the era, perhaps the most impressive city in South East Asia.

The subsequent period, from 1432 to 1864, was one of cultural preservation rather than invention or expansion. Cambodia was under continual military harassment from its neighbours, Thailand and Annam. In 1863 France took control of the government. In 1954 Cambodia re-established its independence and became a constitutional monarchy under King Sihanouk.

Since the fall of King Sihanouk's government in 1970, Cambodia has experienced a series of dramatic changes. Lon Nol founded the Khmer Republic with the support from the U.S. The Lon Nol troops based in the cities and tried to destroy the resistant Khmer troops who gained popularity in the country side. The fighting between the Lon Nol troops and the resistant communist troops became intense ending with

the victory of the communists who entered Pgnom Penh on April 17, 1975.

The Khmer Rouge immediately had a border dispute with its new communist neighbour Vietnam. There was a series of fights between their border patrols which were not heard of by the outside world. In late 1978, 70,000 Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia and in a short time occupied the whole country. The pro-Vietnamese Pol Pot regime was installed in Phnom Penh. The Khmer Rouge withdrew to the jungle and continues to resist.

THE CAMBODIAN REFUGEES:

Despite the wall of silence and secrecy erected by the Pol Pot regime, the world has learned of the terrible fate of the Cambodian people through accounts by the refugees and resistance groups hiding in the jungle. Massacres, executions, forced labour, deportation, imprisonment, have been their daily lot. All potential opponents, whether they collaborated with Sihanoulk, Lon Nol, or the U.S. have been liquidated. All the educated, all those who have studied abroad or who have a veneer of western culture have been shot or sent to forced labour camps from which few return. Several million Cambodians have perished at the hands of the Khmer Rouge or en route to exile. Spreading starvation, no doctors, no medicine and hordes of runaways trying to reach Thailand have produced an estimated one million refugees in camps in Thailand.

Thanks to international aid and the dedication of UNICEF and International Red Cross, their basic needs are being met; most are waiting for a host country to agree to take them in. Many others are hoping that the situation in Cambodia will improve and that they will be able to return home. None of them can forget that Cambodia was a heaven of peace.

CAMBODIAN CUSTOM TRADITION:

Festival:

The most important festival is Lunar New Year which

usually falls in early April. The Lunar calendar is used to determine weddings, funerals, and religious events.

Language:

Khmer, spoken by most of Cambodia's inhabitants, belongs to a small group of languages known as Mon-Khmer. Unlike Vietnamese and Lao, Khmer is a non-tonal language. Most words are one syllable and these words are printed without spaces in forming sentences.

Khmer does not use the Roman alphabet. Certain sounds especially consonant sound at the ends of words, which are common in English, are unknown in Khmer.

Of all the three Indochinese countries, the Cambodians have undergone the most miserable experience. A few refugees from Cambodia have come to Nova Scotia, most have left to join their families in other provinces. In an interview with Mr. Hong from Cambodia, he recounts what danger her faced in trying to leave Phnag Phen in 1975 when communist troops took over.

One Million People

Hon, Hue Tak

In February of 1975, the Communist troops encircled Phnong Phen, Cambodia's capital. The city and the airport were bombed with rockets, thousands of them every day, every hour. Though many airplanes had been destroyed, still many waited for a chance to land and evacuate people. There was no plane schedule. I had bought a ticket three months before and I had to wait at the airport to board a plane at anytime, whenever a seat was available. My family had decided to let me leave the country first because I was young and would be subject to conscription.

I was born in 1949, and I helped my family run our business. Later I had my own business. I had decided to abandon my business and flee before the communists entered the city. This later proved to have saved my life. However, I couldn't get aboard an airplane, and when the situation was so dangerous that no more planes would land. I went to the Thailand border. On the day that the communist troops entered Phnong Phen I entered Thailand and was admitted to a refugee camp.

Cambodia, after the communists took over was a country isolated from the outside world. Later we found out what really happened from refugees who managed to escape to Thailand.

People had the illusion that when communists came, the country would have peace, and people would be freed from the terror of war. So some people did welcome them, and cooked dinner for them.

Three days later the radio announced that American airplanes were going to bomb the city and everyone would have to depart for the countryside immediately. Nobody doubted it, and people took a few day's food with them. Persuaded by communist cadres one million people walked out of the city, everybody, including the cripples, and the patients in the hospitals. When people were out of the city, the communist

cadres with automatic rifles in their hands forced the city dwellers, to walk further and further until families were separated. The people had been duped. The walk had become a death march for thousands and thousands of people. Those who managed to survive were forced to the rice fields to cultivate rice. Those who were found to be of the intellectual class were persecuted. The older people, and the children who couldn't endure the hardship perished.

My parents, brothers and sister could have been among those people in the death march. For since that year I have tried to locate them through the newspaper, and through relatives, and friends, but there seems to be little hope.

I applied to go to France in 1975 since I had a cousin there, but later I decided to stay in Thailand to wait for information about my family. There was little hope. In 1977 I was refused by Australia, and for the U.S. I would have to wait a long time. So I decided to apply to come to Canada.

The cold here is not as terrible as I thought it would be. I can get used to it.

The Canadian government has sponsored me, and sent me to English class, and supported me during my study of English as a second language. I was doing carpentry for a while, later I was not satisfied with it and also they had little business. I am a cook in a restaurant now.

I knew my wife in Thailand and we got married there, she just came over here last week as a result of my sponsoring her.

LAOS

THE COUNTRY:

Laos is a small country of about 91,000 square miles, composed mainly of densely wooded hills, mountains and fertile river valleys. Laos is entirely land-locked. The climate is warm all year long, with temperatures varying between 21C and 32C, except in mountainous areas, which are somewhat cooler. The monsoon rains represent the only marked seasonal change in the climate of Laos.

In 1975 the population was estimated at about three million, the majority of whom lived in the lowland valleys. About 50% are ethnic Lao. The largest minority groups are the Hmong (also called Meo), the Tai Dam (Black Thai) and a group of tribes known as the Kha. Inhabiting mainly the upland and mountain regions, these groups possess distinct cultural backgrounds and languages. However, the culture and language of Lao dominate Laos, particularly the fertile lowlands.

HISTORY:

The history of Laos is rich, long and varied, comprising at least 2,700 years of distinct cultural existence. The earliest reported information on the Lao dates from 843 B.C. when they met a Tartar invasion to their territory. Although the kings of the current Lao monarchy can trace their line of descent to the 8th Century A.D., Laos first emerged as a national entity in 1353 A.D.

The first two centuries of this new kingdom were marked by wars with the neighbouring Kingdoms of Annam (part of present day Vietnam), Thailand, China and Burma. In the 18th Century, the unity of Lan Xang (the original name of Laos meaning "Land of a Million Elephants") ended. A period of fragmentation and growing Thai influence followed until the late 19th century.

France's authority was firmly established in 1899, when Laos was given its modern name and the king became subject to French supervision. The influence of French culture and education dates from this period. Even today, most well-educated Lao speak French and have received their post-secondary education in French under the French school system in Laos.

In 1953 Laos became an independent nation within the French union, but by this time, the Pathet Lao (Lao country party) had begun to revolt against the Royal Lao government. A period of almost continual warfare followed, with the French and later the U.S. supporting the Vientiane-based Royal Lao government and the Vietnamese communists supporting the Pathet Lao. Despite occasional periods of temporary peace under coalition governments, Laos remained divided until 1975.

FAMILY:

Although the family structure is nuclear (mother, father and children), the Lao may consider more distant relatives and unrelated friends of the family as part of that structure. Older people and children are viewed as valuable assets because they free other family members for important tasks. Thus, the family forms a network of support and assistance, both financial and emotional. There is no particular memory of credits and debits, the family simply deals with individual needs as they arise.

During adolescence, boys may leave home and enter a Buddhist temple to experience the life of a monk for several months. When he marries, he moves in to the house or village of his wife.

The emphasis on the family reduces the importance of the individual. One is often seen in relation to the others around him. For example, there are separate words in the Lao language for each person in the family: older brothers, older sisters, younger brothers and sisters, father's older

and younger brothers and sisters, mother's older and younger brothers and sisters, grandparents, in-laws, and so on. And in each case, the individual refers to each of these people by that special relationship title.

In Lao, women are subodinate although they are often the manager of the family finances and the youngest daughter usually inherits the family's house and the land.

Years of warfare and months of dislocation have acted to change the Lao family. The traditional order of the family was disturbed. More women began to go out to work to help support the family and to have a more active and independent life.

LANGUAGE:

Lao, spoken by most of Laos' inhabitants, is a tonal language, normally having six tones (pitches).

Unlike the Vietnamese, Lao does not use the Roman alphabet, Laotians may have difficulty in learning to read and write English.

Lao has also been influenced by Pali, the India language of Theravada Buddhism. Bonzes pray in Pali and many words have been absorbed into Lao.

French was the working language of the government until the early 1970's. A number of French words have also been adopted into Lao, particulary to express concepts introduced during the colonial era.

RELIGION:

Ninety percent of the ethnic Lao population belong to the Therevade variety of Buddhism. However, the dislocations of war and the influence of Western modernization have somewhat lessened the importance of Buddhism.

A belief in reincarnation and the theory of Karma leads

Buddhists to think that one's present life is the result of one's good and bad deeds in a previous life, so the Lao are fatalistic about their own tribulations and the trials of others.

Another attitude of the Lao toward life is the Buddhist concept of "Merit-making." Through right behavior, and Buddhist teaching has much to say about what is "right", man can improve the condition of his next life, eventually finding release, nirvana , from the cycle of birth-death-rebirth.

Animism, and spirit worship, existed in Lao culture long before Buddhism became the state religion in the 14th century A.D. The Lao worship phi, spirits who lived in all parts of nature. These spirits are thought capable of causing disaster if displeased.

Christianity, practised by only a few, until recent times has had a minimal effect on Lao religious thinking.

The Lao do not usually reject one system of religion as inferior to another, rather, they absorb new beliefs into old.

FESTIVALS:

The principal celebration in Laos is "Pimay," Lunar New Year in the Buddhist calendar. Falling in early to mid-April, Pimay marks the end of the dry season and celebrates a return to growth and prosperity. Feasting, processions, dancing and singing take place along with ritual ceremonies of cleansing away the troubles of the old year.

Other festivals include the "Rocket Festival," the "Feast of the Dead" and the "Festival of Waters." The many festivals of the Lao, all tied to significant natural or astrological events, suggest the value they place on living in harmony with their environment. These celebrations also underline their joyous attitude of life and reflect the Lao's love of sharing and hospitality.

Lam Vong:

At the Laotian New Year's party in Nova Scotia, many Canadians participated in the traditional Laotian dance called "Lam Vong".

This is a round dance where couples follow each other around a circle in counter clockwise direction. While they move their wrists and arms in rhythm with the music. A change of partner usually occurs during the course of the dance. Couple by couple, they continue to proceed around the table moving their wrists and arms in rhythm to the music until the music stops. The dance of Lam Vong is a reflection of the delicate and graceful gentleness of the Laotian people.

Baci:

In Nova Scotia, the people of Laos keep their custom of Baci, which is an essential element in Laos culture and is unique to Laos. The central meaning of Baci is a person offering blessing to another person, to wish him good health and prosperity. While he does so, he ties cotton strings on the recipient's wrists.

To perform a Baci, a large cone-shaped tree is prepared. It is made from delicate rolled banana leaves, woven together with flowers, and a long slender stick from which hangs the cotton threads. It is placed on the table surrounded by sweet cakes and other delicacies.

To start the master of ceremonies, usually the elder or community leader, will chant the main blessing while everybody gathers around the table. The chant that they offer is a sing-song. They sing to make the cotton threads full of good wishes and they wish the recipients good luck, and good fortune.

When the chanting is over, the blessing-offering begins. The master of ceremony will offer a particular blessing for their honored guests, while he ties the cotton strings on their wrists.

Then everyone begins "giving baci to everyone else. While the strings are being tied on the hand, a bowl containing food is pressed into the other hand. This is eaten right away. In turn, everybody gets good wishes from everyone else. By no means, is the custom of Baci a solemn event. In fact, everybody enjoys the light atmosphere of Baci.

The people of Laos also hold this custom of Baci on many occasions. Some examples are: for a new born baby, newly weds, someone who is sick, a visitor in their house, or to express simple thanks. So the custom of Baci reflects the Laotian's nature. In serious moments of life, the Laotians are buoyant and optimistic. They laugh, enjoy beauty and appreciate life's pleasures.

In a refugee camp for two years

Huan, Teddy

I am from Parkse, the second largest city in the southern part of Laos. There are trees, hills and forests, and it is much like Halifax. There are many Laotian, Vietnamese and Chinese living there. Coffee is the main product and export of this southern province.

Vientian is the capital city of Laos, it is in the central part of the country. People in central and southern Laos speak the same language but use different tones.

I had a store where I sold staples, I had also been a biscuit maker. So I stated I was a biscuit maker when I applied to come to Canada. My business was affected when the communists took over because Laos imports most of its staples and does not have many things to export. When the communists came they stopped importing this type of merchandise. Goods were running short. The market became more chaotic everyday and I had to sell all my stock to pay my debts.

My children were educated in a Chinese school. They all have learned some Chinese. I have eight children; my eldest daughter is 19 years old and my youngest son is 8 years old.

At first I didn't know how we could leave, since we have many children, but gradually we sold our goods and in 1977 we moved to Vientian, because from Vientian there was only a river separating us from Thailand.

We stayed in a Thai refugee camp for two years. There were about fifty thousand Laotian and Vietnamese refugees there.

There are differences between the Laotian and Chinese cultures. We Chinese in Laos still retain our cultural identity. We celebrate Chinese New Year. Living in Laos, we also participate in their New Year's celebrations which occur in April. Unlike the Chinese who bury the deceased, the Laotian cremate them.

The Laotians are a gentle, delicate people. They would never do any harm or violence.

The Laotian life is simple. They let the Chinese or Vietnamese conduct business. They are engaged in farming and producing handicrafts.

I didn't think of applying for admission to Canada at first, because at that time the criteria for admission into Canada were strict, and I had many children. I was thinking of another country such as France, or the United States. But then Canada decided to adopt an Indochinese refugee plan which would allow 50,000 people to enter. I think my family is among that 50,000. A preacher helped us apply for admission into Canada.

We arrived in Halifax on November 2, 1979. A doctor, an interpreter and a government official welcomed us at the airport. I am very grateful to the Canadian Government, they have kindly taken care of us. Two other Laotian families arrived on the same plane as us, but we were Laotian Chinese.

I had attended the Halifax English Second Language classes for five months before I got my present job. Due to my age, I couldn't remember what I studied.

Gradually I got accustomed to the environment here. The cold is gradually becoming less and less severe for me.

The job I have now was arranged by Manpower. I hadn't worked in this trade before; we make plastic sailing boats. Though my skin got irritated from contact with the plastic, I am getting interested in the trade. I am doing my best but due to the language barrier, I cannot fully understand what they teach me; however, they are very patient.

I rented an apartment in Halifax. Then my daughter came from France and my mother-in-law came from a refugee camp, so I have a big family. My language teacher advised us that it would be expensive to rent a larger apartment for a family of such a size and suggested buying a house. So with my savings,

and her enthusiastic help, we bought a house in which we now live. She helped us with everything: Looking for the house, filling out all the papers. Even now she comes here once in a while to see us and remind us what we have to do. She helps interpret for us and answer government letters, and fill out income tax forms. We are very grateful to her.

At home we speak mostly Chinese and some Laotian with my children, and now as they learn more English, my children use it more and more.

I hope my children can have more tutoring in English because refugee camps and different curriculum have put them behind other children.

I feel a heavy family burden and my income is about $800.00 per month. It goes into a housing mortgage, oil and groceries. My wife has unsteady work as a part-time chamber-maid. You can not say it is enough money, because with my income, we live from hand to mouth.

I rarely go out other than to work, but I made friends with other Chinese from Vietnam. We go to the Chinese Baptist congregation on Sunday afternoon.

At home we make Chinese dishes, sometimes we also make Laotian, or Vietnamese food. We prefer peppers like the Laotians,so we combine Chinese Laotian recipes.

We became Christians in the refugee camp. At first I had no religion, we were too busy earning a living. As we didn't have anything to do, a minister came and talked with us everyday. He gave us a Bible and taught us how to read. Then we knew that there is a God and we believe in God.

I am still Laotian

Keophysavong, Soullivan

I attended primary school and secondary school in Laos. After that I did my technical training in Laos and England. I completed a school radio communication course in England in mid 1974 and then I returned to Laos. At that time the communists were beginning to take over Laotian politics and there was a coalition government, in which the communists gradually dominated. I could foresee the situation, and I said to my wife "Let's get out of here, this is not our world." It was January 1975.

I had planned to return to England, and I wrote to apply for a job there.

However, my wife's niece and her husband immigrated to Canada in 1974 and I got an idea, I said to my wife "How about going to Canada, it sounds like a very good place to go."

My wife is a nurse. She wrote to apply for a job and she got one in Nova Scotia.

We had to apply through correspondence to the Canadian Embassy in Singapore. I had to get an exit visa, in order to get out of Loas. It took so long. Letters were too slow. About April, when the political situation was really in bad shape I said "we've got to get out right now" I went to get an exit visa but I knew it wasn't allowed. I was kind of lucky anyway. My wife is not a Laotian, she is Mauritian.

Ideally, I wanted to go to England because I did my studies there and hoped to find a job there. We went to the Laos police to apply for an exit visa. This was a funny mistake. The police examined my wife's application, they wrote some notes and stamped and signed it; she had no problem getting a visa because she is not Laotian, she is a Mauritian. They looked at mine, they whispered and wrote notes and stamped it and signed it, the same with my wife's. I said "Jesus I am allowed to get out." I didn't read the visa. I was so happy.

I went to apply for a Fench visa because an English visa is harder. The Embassy gave me the visa anyway which was a surprise. I booked a ticket from Bangkok to France which was all right. I went to the Laos air line to book. They looked at me and said "Are you sure you are allowed to get out?" Then I showed the official my passport and visa, he examined it and said "Do you know you are not allowed to get out." He showed me the writing on it "This person is not allowed to get out." Though I was upset I was lucky at the same time. It was lucky that he found out otherwise he would have booked my ticket and I would have gone to the airport and been caught by the police.

So I had to find another way to get out, that is to cross the Mekong River. I knew somebody who frequently travelled across the river who knew the customs people of either side, so she said she would help me if I would pay money to the customs officials of both sides. So I bribed my way through. I did not have to risk my life to cross the river like many people did.

I showed my passport to the customs officer, whom we had met the day before, and the same thing happened at the Thai side. I took a train from the border to Bangkok, and flew to Paris.

We wanted to find a temporary job in Paris. The funny thing is that I was allowed to work there because France colonized Laos before, but I could not find a job. My wife could find work as a nurse anywhere but she was not allowed to work. We ran out of money and needed help from the social service department. We moved to the cheapest hotel. I did not intend to stay in France permanently, we moved to the cheapest hotel. I did not intend to stay in France for more than two weeks but I waited three months then I went to England as a vistor and got a job.

In the meantime my application was still with the Canadian immigration commission. They made it harder and harder for me. Usually one person can get a job in Canada and the other person can go along. My wife could get a job as a nurse, but they asked that the head of the family had to get a job so I was stuck.

So I had to find another way, my wife's niece agreed to sponsor us, so our visa came through and in August 1976 we left.

When I first came here, I unloaded trucks, I must have done it for about three weeks. I also took several other jobs before I started to work for CBC as a technician.

I am still a Laotian in many ways, although I have been in Western countries for twelve years. I know Western culture and traditions fairly well, as one has to adapt to the country he resides in although he still brings some of his own characteristics.

For example: When my Laotian friends stay together we could behave or do something as we would in our country. For example: we would offer drinks, share what we have together automatically. In Laos you live in a small community, and know everybody. In Western society, the way it is here, you make sure that you don't call during lunch or supper time. There are other Laotian traditions that the Laotians in Nova Scotia practice when they get together, one example is Baci.

I just got a Laotian musical instrument, a Ku Kan, made of bamboo. It works on the same system as the organ. You have a tube cut in certain lengths from short to long, and is played like a flute.

I like Nova Scotia a lot. I like nature, and the sea. Here it takes you about ten minutes to get out of the city and see the open space, to go fishing, to see wildlife. Here I like to barbecue in our backyard. In England I hardly saw anybody do that.

For me, it was not difficult to adjust to the life in Nova Scotia. I was exposed to Western life when I studied in England. I went back to Laos and then came out about the same time the communists took over. For me there is a different way of life in Canada and England. I like the diversity of ethnic people and multiculturalism here. I found it takes a longer while to make a friend here than in England. It takes more time to become familiar, as people here are more reserved.

I know that our future is in Canada, a vast country with resources. We have a lot of opportunities.

Three-Mile swim to freedom

Varakoth, Bowkeung

I was born in 1941 in Vientian, the capital of Laos. My country had a war and the communists took over my country in 1974.

When the communists first came, they treated the people nicely, but in the second year, they started to arrest people who were ex-soldiers, policemen, civil servants and the like, and sent them to work in the jungle in the northern part of Laos. We wanted to flee the country but we did not have enough money to bribe the policemen and the border guards. The only way we could do it was to swim across the river, which is the border between Thailand and Laos. It is three miles wide.

I have six children but I could only take four with me, I left behind the two older ones, one is thirteen, one is ten, with their grandmother. I put my four children in a tire, my wife and I swam and pushed the tire across the river. It was very dangerous. If the communist soldiers saw us, they would have shot us.

Fortunately we arrived safely on the other side of the river. Once we were in Thailand, we were taken to a refugee camp.

When the Canadian immigration officers came to the refugee camp to interview me, they asked me what I did in my country. I said I was a mechanic. So they admitted me to Canada. However, I have not had a chance to do a mechanic's job in Canada yet.

I would like to tell you something about Loa customs. In Laos my house was close to a big temple. It is an old national temple. Before the communists took over, every December, the government held a celebration to honour the past soldiers and heroes who fought the Thai and Cambodian invaders during Laotian history.

In my country, many young people often went to a temple to experience the life there for a month or to live for several months when they were sixteen years old.

We celebrate our new year in April, and we used to hold a three day celebration. We held rituals at home to show respect to our grandparents and parents. We bought fruit and flowers, put them in the "Mak Beng"* and offered them to our parents.

In our country, we treat bone fractures with Laotian medicine, which is very efficient. In just fifteen days or one month the fracture would be healed. We also went to the temple to ask the Phou Too (old man) for treatment when we were sick.

Before I left Laos, I went to the Khouba (bonze) in the temple, he used a knife to lift the skin and put a little black thing called "Khong Dy" under my skin. With this thing in my body, we wouldn't be hurt by knives or guns but you have to follow an order he indicated. We couldn't drink beer or alcohol. I felt I had to do this, because when I stayed in refugee camp the Thai's liked to hit the refugees. When you walked on the street, they wanted to rob you but if you did not have the money with you they would hit you. With this "Khong Dy" in my body, I could not let a woman or a friend touch my hair. If they did I would get sick, then both of us must buy ten flowers and ten candles, put them together and beg pardon of the Buddha. I also cannot steal; if I did, I would be sick.

I have four children with me now. I teach my children our Laotian customs and traditions, I tell them we have no country now and we are living in a new country, but that they shouldn't forget the Lao language. In Canada I don't like the custom of children moving away from the parents. I am afraid that my children will grow up and leave. The custom in Laos is, the son will live with his parents until he gets married, when he moves in to live with the wife's family. Then after a period he can either come back to live with his parent's family or organize his own house.

I like Halifax but it is difficult to look for a job here. Washing dishes is a hard job for me, the work often lasts until midnight. I want to learn a trade, perhaps work as a mechanic.

* "Mak Beng" is a Laotian word for a special container.

VIETNAM

Values:

Lying on the crossroads between China and India, Vietnam received the influence of a mixture of values - Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism.

Confucian teachings are the behavior code - faithfulness, filial piety, humanity and the like. The indications of these values are; respect for authority, well-mannered actions and self control.

Taoist teachings emphasize the virtues of avoiding excess, and attempting to reconcile opposing principles. Happiness comes out of following the middle way and harmony.

Buddhist teachings stress tolerance and complete respect for the destiny of fellow creatures. Each one of us is on a personal path towards our eventual destiny and that path is unique.

In summary, the Vietnamese value the humanistic quality of man and society. The stress on man's moral and ethical nature rather than the physical environment is shown in the Vietnamese saying, "Di lau moi biet duong dai, o lan moi biet con nguoi phai chang" (just as the length of a road is known only by actually travelling on it, the qualities of a man are known only by living with him for a long time).

Out of these basic values come certain cultural characteristics which affect attitudes to education and the structure of the family, as well as the religion used to uphold and reinforce these values.

Education:

Vietnamese people place a high value on learning and a great deal of respect is given to scholars, educators. It is the parents' duty to provide a good education for their children. No matter what financial difficulty the family has, an education for the children is the highest priority. To both urban and rural Vietnamese, education represents the essential stepping stone to profitable jobs and social prestige. Though school is not always available throughout the country, parents make every effort to have their children tutored, at least in reading and writing at elementary levels. Out of respect for the teachers and educators, Vietnamese students are quiet in class and listen carefully.

After April 1975, school in south Vietnam underwent a series of changes. Most former art teachers were displaced since they are considered capitalist oriented. Text books were also replaced by those with communist orientations. Children to high school students have to take a Marxist Leninist lecture every week. Students whose parents had some involvement with the former government had a difficult time to enter into higher education. Children's schooling was disrupted because the social change. Families were forced to move to the "New Economic Zone". Some families tried to escape but did not succeed and the children stayed in refugee camps for years.

Religion:

Ancestor worship which is part of the ethical teaching of the philosopher Confucius is the dominant factor in the Vietnamese traditional society.

Besides Confucianism, main religions in Vietnam are Buddhism, Christianity, (Cahtolic and Protestant), hoa-hoa (renovated Buddhism), Cao-Dai (a combination of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism). Some Vietnamese are superstituous and animistic and attribute friendly and unfriendly spirits to plants and natural phenomena.

After April 1975, religious activities were discouraged by the regime. In some rural places, teachers were dismissed from their positions because they were Christians. Some priests and monks were arrested and accused of anti-government activities. Christmas Day and Buddha's birthday are no longer holidays.

Names and Languages:

Vietnamese names are usually composed from two to four words. The family comes first, followed by the middle name (if any) then the given name. Example: Tran Cuong, Nguyen Van Tai, Le Thi Bach Lan. In Vietnamese society, these persons are not known as Mr. Tran, Mr. Nguyen or Miss Le, but as Mr. Cuong, Mr. Tai or Miss Lan.

The most common Vietnamese family names are: Nguyen, Tran, Le, Huynh, Phan, Pham, Vu, Ngo, Ly, Do.

Male names usually depict courage (Hung, Dung, Cuong), properity (Phuc, Loc), virtue (Nhan, Nghia, Le, Tin), intelligence (Tri, Thong, Minh). Women are named after flowers (Cuc, Lien, Lan, Hoa, Mai), virtue (Hanh, Trang) beauty (Dung, Dien, Le, My) and so on. Married women usually keep their maiden name.

The Vietnamese language is spoken by all the Vietnamese only with a different accent by people from different regions. It is a monosyllabic and tonal language. A change of tone in the speaker's voice changes the meaning of the word. Two Examples of Vietnamese words are Chao- Hello, Cam on- Thanks.

Festivals

The key festival in Vietnam is called Tet. Similar to Christmas and New Year, Tet is celebrated on the first day of the Chinese Lunar calendar, usually falling in late January or early February. A holiday from school and work, Tet allows people to start anew: debts are paid or forgiven, employers pay bonuses and children receive gifts of money in traditional red envelopes from parents and older relatives. These gifts are symbols of good luck and prosperity for the year to come.

Another important holiday is the Mid-Autumn festival, sometimes known as Children's Day. A harvest festival celebrated on the night of the full moon is Lunar August, Mid-Autumn festival is a celebration of and demonstration of gratitude for the success of the harvest. Adults enjoy watching the children play with specially made paper lanterns illuminated by single candles.

Family:

Vietnamese is a strong, family-oriented culture, the family is the very source of life, getting from the family and giving to the family are what life is all about. The extended family, grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws and cousins, form a network of support and assistance, both financial and emotional.

Because of this emphasis on the family, Vietnamese see themselves less as individuals and more as members of the a family unit. It is common that the elder sister in the family will sacrifice her own education or career ambitions to earn enough money to support her grandfather or to put her brother through school.

In theory, a Vietnamese wife is supposed to be submissive to her husband, however, women have a very important place in the family and often exercise considerable power in daily life. It is not uncommon for a Vietnamese man to turn his pay over to his wife for her to budget.

In the family, obedience to and respect for elders is taken for granted. Arguing openly with parents is exceptional even for Vietnamese adults with children of their own. Young children and adults are expected to learn correct behavior through observation and imitation of elder children and adults.

A number of factors have acted and are still acting to change the Vietnamese family. Years of warfare and communist rule have distribed the traditional value. However, the family will remain a strong unit for the Vietnamese in Canada for some time to come.

Together in a New Land

Chu, Long

I left Hanoi in April 1979 on a motorboat. This boat was an iron one which was mined in the harbour during the war. We bought it from the authorities. Every evening when the tide was down, a hundred men would go to dig out the boat. It cost 45,000 piastre. We put up more decks in the boat so that it could accommodate 400 people. At first we estimated it would cost each person 1000 piastres for each.

During the time when we had the boat fixed and renovated, we provided all kinds of luxury foods to the workers. Beer, meat, chicken, fish, tobacco and the like. When we took the engine to a machinist's shop they said they dared not make things for Chinese and asked us to get permission from the authorities. We had to pay for permission. Generally speaking, everywhere we had to pay.

When I left, I left the house and everything to my parents. When my parents left the country, they could not sell it.

It took us nine days and four nights to go to the Hong Kong coast, arriving on May 30/79, normally, sail boats take one tc two months. My boat was 50 tons and was still very seaworthy.

I stayed in a Hong Kong refugee camp from May 1979 until April 14/80, when I left Hong Kong and came to Canada.

I had let my younger brother leave before me because he was single and young and I was afraid that he would have some problems with the authorities. After I left, my younger sister and my parents left together. At last our whole family was reunited in a Hong Kong camp. We stayed in Hong Kong for eleven months and then my wife, two children and I came to Canada first.

After we arrived in Canada, I applied for my church

sponsor group to sponsor my parents, two younger brothers and sister. They came to Canada on October 30/80. I am very appreciative that my family is united again, and that we have found good jobs. That makes me happy. My sponsor group was nice to us. They belong to the Christian church, and we have attended all the activities in the church.

We can understand their ideas, but their characters and customs we still can't understand well. According to my opinion Canadian people do have some customs like the Chinese, such as respect for older people, for instance: on my father's birthday I organized a party for him, and invited my sponsors to come to join our party, they seemed to be quite interested in the celebration.

I got my first job as a tailor in "Moondance designs" which Manpower recommended me for. I worked there for a period, and while I was studying English, I just worked part-time. After that my sponsor introduced me to M & J's Athletic Wear Ltd. and that's the shop I am working in now. How could I get this job? My sponsor who works for CBC, went to that shop one day and ordered some athletic wear. While talking to the owner he discovered that they wanted to expand the tailor shop and needed some new people. Then my sponsor brought me there and filled out the application form.

Generally speaking, I am satisfied with my work. Within my family three people work in M & J's, my brother, my wife and me. I feel proud of my family, because I see a lot of our refugees coming here who are not a complete family.

I am interested in attending the Indochinese Association. I think it is a good idea to have the chance to see our people. If one is not in such an organization then everyday we just go to work and come back home. Moreover, if we have any problems we can help each other, because we are far away from home, and we have no relatives here.

We had no Choice

Dam, Hong

I'm Chinese, I was born in 1937 in Amoy, China. After graduating from high school, I became a reporter for a Chinese daily newspaper "Great China" from 1956 to 1963. At that time, I began to hold two jobs: as a salesman and as an accountant, because I had trained in Chinese bookkeeping for a year. When the Communists came into South Vietnam in 1975, I had fifteen years' experience as a manager.

I've been married to Ngo-Nhu since 1959. We've got five children: a daughter 20, and four sons, 17, 16, nine and eight and were living very comfortably with my manager's position.

After liberation, we had to leave our house and go into a "New Economic Zone" as pioneer farmers. We developed the wilderness to become farms. We did the plowing in the forest. We had to do hard work with our hands, for two full years. We got nothing to eat, and were suffering under the communists. We had no other choice but to leave Vietnam, and the sooner the better.

We wished to escape successfully, so our family was divided into a few groups. My daughter Jin Hung went out with her cousins on April 24, 1978. Then my wife with two children, nine and eight, started on May 13, 1978, with my sister. They all escaped successfully to China.

But when on May 31, 1978 I began to move with another two sons, 17 and 16 and a niece, 14 we were caught by the Viet-Cong (communists) and put into jail for a long time. After we were freed, I lost all my property including our house. I was homeless and was separated from my wife and children. In this situation, I suffered much, and because it was so difficult for me, I wanted to try another escape.

I had the responsibility of encouraging the group to earn enough money to try a second escape. At that time, each

person who wanted to leave Vietnam, must have 10 taels of gold (12 ounces) and the children half that amount, to pay to the communist government.

October 20, 1978, our boat, MT132 shipped out with 625 people. We had to jam against each other in that 23 meter long boat, short of food and water, for seven days on the sea. At last on October 27, 1978, our boat arrived in Malaysia. They let us stay in the Kotabharu Refugee Camp for fifteen months, but we had not enough food to eat.

While we were staying in the Malaysian refugee camp, at the end of April 1979, my daughter Jin Hung started for the second time to escape from China to Hong Kong. She was successful. She was accepted by the Canadian Delegation and came to Canada on August 20, 1979.

As soon as I received a letter from my daughter from Canada, I requested to re-settle in Canada. On the 26th of January 1980, I arrived in Halifax with my two sons, 17 and 16, and a niece 14, and was re-united with my daughter Jin Hung.

We were under a private sponsorship that rented a house on Robie Street for us, and paid us $320.00 monthly for food; we felt comfortable in Canada.

On March 17th, I began to work at the Lord Nelson Hotel as a cleaner in the kitchen. After three weeks of working, I got a promotion to salesman and as a cook serving food the customers in the Beverage Room. I worked there from Monday till Saturday, and in the mornings I went to Chebucto School to learn more English. My daughter Jin Hung is working in China House Restaurant as a cashier.

I applied to sponsor my wife and two children to join me in Canada. At the moment they are still in China. Unfortuantely the paper work takes a long time, and of course I miss them very much. I wish I could be reunited with them as soon as possible. We have been separated for more than two years.

It was a dangerous escape

Hoang, Due

I was born in 1939 in the countryside of North Vietnam. My father passed away I was a child and my mother brought me up. I have never had a chance to go to school. I was fourteen years old when I started to work on ships and I rarely came home. I have already worked at so many things in my life.

I worked on a ship which carried goods and passengers. My wife stayed home and looked after the children. I lived in Quang Ninh.

It was dangerous to escape from North Vietnam however, in 1978 the communist government began deporting ethnic Chinese. We decided to take advantage of this confused situation to escape by boat for Hong Kong. Later we learned that all the Chinese families in our area were forced to leave, and most of them had gone across the border to China. I wanted my mother to escape with us, but she did not want to, and later my sister took her to China. Nobody that I knew from our area remains there today.

While fleeing from North Vietnam to Hong Kong, we did not have enough water, so we took water from the sea to cook rice. We took almost two months to arrive in Hong Kong, and we stayed in a Hong Kong refugee camp for eight months. I was asked to go to England but before I answered that, the Canadian immigration officer came to our camp and let us come to Canada, and the people in the camp said: "Your are extremely lucky to go to Canada."

I arrived in Dartmouth on December 8, 1979. When I was in Vietnam I lived in a small town and we never dreamed that today we would be in Canada.

We were sponsored by the church. I depend on my children to communicate with my sponsors because my wife and I just know a little bit of English. Suppose I go to work people ask me,

"Will I come to work tomorrow?", I can only say yes or no. Because when I was a child, I had no chance to go to school, so how could I study English now? That's a big problem for me. When we first came here, we went to English school for a few months, but I still don't know much, now I can just understand a little. Everyday when I go to work I must make four bus transfers, I cannot read road names but I can recognize the road easily. The apartment where I live now, my sponsor rents fro me, but since I got this job I support the family myself.

Canada is a good country, only the weather is not good for us since we come from a warm country.

I know many people who came here still keep the custom of ancestor worship, but my family doesn't. When we were in North Vietnam, sometimes we had a big festival and ate vegetarian meals on certain days of the month, but here we go to work and so we can't remember well which day the festival comes.

My children did not have much education in our homeland either. For example: my eldest daughter had just been to school a few months when the Vietnamese communist government forbade the teaching of Chinese in schools, so since that time they couldn't continue their education, and just studied a little bit of Vietnamese. Not long after that we left our country to go to Hong Kong. My children do not understand Chinese very well but they can comprehend a little. Fortunately we came to Canada and my children have a chance to continue their education.

Now, they play with their Canadian neighbors. They speak English and don't like to speak our language. I said "If you don't speak our language, I won't let you eat," but this has no effect. Anyway they like bread, chips, and Canadian food rather than rice, or our ethnic food. Later on, I think, they will follow the Canadian way of life entirely.

The people here helped me

Hong, Kieu

I came to Canada on January 10, 1980 from a Malaysian Refugee Camp. I used to teach Chinese in Saigon, South Vietnam. In late 1974 I changed to become a self-employed seamstress in my home.

I left the country, because I found life was becoming difficult, and had no feedom, since the Vietnamese communists came they did not allow people to run private businesses. In March 1978, the communist government sent their employees to all the merchants' stores or houses to inventory and register all the goods, machines and property of people. After a few weeks, they sent their trucks to the merchants' to take all the goods, machines, even furniture into government storage. That was when the government said it bought goods from the merchants, but if it did or not, only the people knew. After that, the government sent the merchants to what they called the New Economic Zone, in fact, a jungle area where food and medicine were scarce.

I left the country with the family of a friend the end of March, 1978. My husband left one month earlier and I have not heard of him since. (Now I doubt whether he is still alive but maybe he was kept in a communist jail). At that time I was carring a baby that was due soon. I was risking my life for freedom.

I went to Bach Lien (one province of South Vietnam) to stay for a few days, then I left for Ca Mau (another province of South Vietnam). I boarded a small boat which carried three hundred and forty-one people, (nobody could stretch their feet in the boat.) That was the night of April 9, 1979.

On April 11, 1979, we were attacked by Thailand pirates, who robbed us of all our belongings, destroyed the gate of the boat and took the compass. In the chaos, I was pushed down and my labor began. The next day we met a Malaysian Navy boat which took us onto the ship, and gave us water and

porridge. At that time, my baby was born and I bled so much even though I had three needles.

After having three or four hours to relax, we were asked to go back to our boat and were told that we would be towed to the refugee Island. I was carried on a stretcher to the boat which was dragged out into the Malaysian Ocean for four hours. At that time our pumping machine did not work. All young people had to bail the water out of the boat, it was dangerous. In the meantime, we yelled, we tried to ask for help, but the Malaysians didn't care. At last, our machine was fixed up. After four hours the Navy cut off the chain and then they went away. We had to travel three days because we lost the destination called Pahong we jumped and swam to the coast. I was the last one in the boat, four people helped me to get to the coast, after that I was completely unconscious, my body was wet, and I laid down on the beach until my garments were dry.

One-half hour later, the Provincial President of Pahang and policemen came, they kicked us and beat us cruelly, they commanded us to go back to our boat, we cried and begged them to have mercy on us and to let us stay there. Finally we had to pay three thousand U.S. dollars to them, in order to stay there. They tried to isolate us and wouldn't let us have a chance to go outside to get food from the stores.

Because I was bleeding too much in the boat, I was considered extremely sick and in dangerous condition. The second day I was sent to the hospital with my baby. I stayed at the hospital for eleven days, as soon as I was feeling a little better, the doctor asked me to go back to the camp. The police driver drove me to the police station to report. The Malaysian Policeman checked my bag and took some of my nice used blouses, slacks and one used blanket which I got from the nice people at the hospital before I left. At that time I tried to keep my tears back and requested the police officer, many times politely, only to give me back the blanket. He did.

When I got back to the place where we landed, I found we did not have enough food. People told me that they received a can of rice (the size of a coke can). This would have to last for a week.

One week after, I was sick again, and my baby had diarrhoea, a high temperature and vomited every time he drank milk. I told the police and someone told me a doctor and a nurse were coming to see my baby. When the nurse came to see my baby, she said I would have to go with her to the outside. As soon as I and my baby were outside, she asked me to get in the ambulance truck. It was too late for me to go back inside to get clothing.

After I arrived at the hospital the doctor examined my baby and told me it must stay in the hospital because he was sick. Then it was sent to the patients' room, I met the Chinese nurse again, who had given me the clothes last time I was visiting there. When I arrived at the hospital she was nice and immediately gave me a piece of cloth to wrap my baby in (just in case he wet again). On the second morning of my visit, about 7 o'clock the second shift of nurses came on duty. One of the Malaysian nurses went to my baby's bed and took away the piece of cloth which my baby was wrapped in. A nice women (who was the mother of another patient) immediately passed me her baby's clothes and told me to dress my baby. I didn't hesitate. The nurse asked me who had given me the piece of cloth and told me I was responsible to clean it. I tried to keep my tears inside, but I couldn't. I told her that I didn't know my baby had to stay in the hospital and I didn't bring any clothes for him. I also told her if I was to be responsible for cleaning the piece of cloth, I would. She grumbled and gave me some pieces of plain newspaper to wrap my baby in. (Those papers are locked in my memory and I will never forget.) At lunch and supper time she didn't give me anything to eat (not even rice), but finally someone did give me a small amount of porridge.

After five days of treatment my baby was getting better, and we were to go back to our camp. When we reached it I found no one living there. The policeman told me that my

people had moved to Aneah Air Beach, three days ago. This place was a beach as well as a forest where we were able to find plenty of food. Because the water was brought from an old well and we didn't have any kind of medicine to kill the germs, my baby was sick again. After four or five days, with the medicine the Vietnamese doctor (who was in camp also) my baby became weaker and skinner by the day. It was the same problem as last time. He had diarrhoea, vomiting a high fever and his stomach was getting bigger and harder. I tried to get the doctor to let me take my baby to the hospital, but there was a rule that each patient had to have the approval from the doctor. The doctor gave me a hard time and asked me to come back after lunch. After lunch the doctors wife told me that he was in bed. My neighbor seeing my baby seriously sick suggested that I ask the police directly, (I could speak English very well.) I went to the office to ask the police to let my baby go to the hospital. The angry doctor knew that I had gone there and tried to stop me. He told the police my baby wasn't sick. The doctor asked to check my baby's stools whether he had diarrhoea or not. He emphasized that many people tried to go to the hospital to take advantage. I was so angry at this time that I couldn't be friendly. I didn't expect to go to the hospital myself, but being responsible for my baby's life, I just couldn't bear to stay in camp. I knew he was a bad doctor because many patients complained that they had to pay him money in order to go to the hospital for treatment. Otherwise he wouldn't give his approval. The police saw that I was angry with the doctor and that my baby was so skinny, he comforted me and asked me not to worry about anything. The kind policemen told the doctor that it was necessary for my baby to go to the hospital.

When I finally arrived at the hospital the doctor said my baby would have to stay, because he was once again very ill. The doctor had to put a tube in his nose to pump out the gas.

We stayed in Aneah Air Beach for four months, no national representatives came to interview. If we wanted to go to see the International representatives we had to pay the police-

men to let us out of the refugee camp. Accidentally, United Nations delegates learned that we were there, because of the untimely death of the guide which a tree trunk fell on. They decided with the Malaysian authorities to take us in September to a UNR camp, where we had enough food. Everything you can imagine was provided, canned pork, canned fish, canned chicken, fresh vegetables, cooking oil, tea and detergent. We had a house with no walls, only a roof which was very strong. When it rained we used plastic to keep from getting wet. (One bed in Canada can sleep ten people in a refugee camp.) The water was bad, we had medicine to kill the germs. It was extremely warm in this place, because there were no trees for shade. Everyone had to line up to get water for cooking, bathing, and cleaning.

At first I didn't intend to come to Canada, but I heard people saying Canada was a peaceful and nice country with a good refugee resettlement program. I applied for admission into Canada on October 3, 1979.

I was privately sponsored. After I came here I felt Canadians were friendly. The people here helped me with everything, some of those who helped were not sponsors. The big change in weather, from continuous warm seasons to changes in the seasons, made me feel a little uncomfortable. I was weak and had to look after my baby. That was hard for me.

Since I came to Canada I've kept our custom of worshipping ancestors twice every month, the first day and the fifteenth of the lunar month. There are no Buddhist temples in Halifax, but I keep a shrine to the Goddess of Mercy and Kuan Kung (an ancient Chinese hero) at home and burn incense, and pray from time to time.

I spend my leisure time repairing our clothes, writing letters, reading books and washing clothes.

I am not used to group activities, and my baby makes it inconvenient to go out to see friends.

Due to my health I am working at sewing part-time now and receiving welfare. I find I lack sufficient English to communicate

at work. Sewing is not my long-term occupation, last year I registered for a Manpower Bookkeeping Training Course. I hope the course will be coming up soon. I hope my life will gradually improve and I can eventually support myself.

I like to live in a city like Halifax, it is peaceful and relaxing.

We Shall Be Grateful

Hua, Thinh

In 1975 the Communists took over South Vietnam, and they started to illegally confiscate private property and arrest people. Whoever was rich and well-off was guilty. Private business was prohibited.

In 1975, thousands of people had already left the country. When the Communists took over, I was working in the airport and I had a chance to fly but my family did not want me to.

At the time I was a manager of an import company and a paper factory. I offered my house, cars and gold to the communist regime, but in August 1976 they still wanted to confiscate all my property and put my father and me in jail for one month. They said that I had been in the army, had been sent to the U. S. for training and traded with the Americans.

Besides confiscating our property, the Communists also sent the whole family to the rural area to what they call a 'New Economic Zone'.

In May 1978, there was another campaign to confiscate private property. Everybody was looking for a way to leave the country.

When the communists took over, my family divided into groups and sought to escape. I had tried to escape several times but did not succeed. Finally six people in my family arrived in Australia. I, my wife, children, sister and brother-in-law arrived in Halifax. My father and five other sisters are still in Vietnam.

I left in May 1978 by boat. We sailed from Phan-Thiet, a town in central Vietnam to Hong Kong.

While in the refugee camp, I planned to go to the U.S.

because I have a sister there and she could sponsor us. But since there was not enough food or water in the camp, we registered to come to Canada. It was faster. There were two delegations who came to interview me, one represented Quebec, another represented Ottawa.

Since I had studied French before in Vietnam, and also knew some English, the delegations admitted my family to come to Canada. At first I registered to come to Toronto, Ontario. Then when we landed in Quebec, the Immigration official asked me to stay there to do the interperting for them. But my wife did not like it, so they asked me whether I would like to go to Vancouver, but I said it's too far. At last, they sent us to Halifax.

I arrived in Halifax on October 8, 1979. When we first came here, it was like starting a new life, we had not a thing in our home. Not like in Vietnam before the communists came, where we had our business, a sufficient income, it was easy for us to buy things that we like. Now I have a family and it is hard to study to upgrade my skills. After coming here I only studied English for one month in Chebucto School, later on Manpower recommended me to work in a carpentry shop where I remain.

My impression of Canada and Canadians are very nice. When we first arrived, everyone from the church, sponsoring group, private agencies and government helped us; the help of these people was limitless. This is the thing we shall never forget. The fact that they have helped us in our initial settlement problems means we can have a good life today.

I think discrimination in Canada is a minor problem, I would say that many Canadians do not understand much about refugees from Indochina. Many Americans were involved in the Vietnam war, and in some parts of Canada they understand our Vietnamese: Quebec and Toronto, because in these big cities some Vietnamese students went to study and settle there.

Because this province is small, when we registered to

study a skill, we have to wait for one to two years. When our people come here the men usually work in a restaurant, and the women work as chamber maids or seamstresses.

I understand that sponsoring the refugees is not the duty of Canadians. They do it because of humanity. Sometimes in a family, a brother and sister have different sponsors, and the period of sponsorship is not the same. Some ended in nine months, some ended in one year. When we first came here we did not know how to go to supermarkets, banks, make an appointment with a doctor etc... Our sponsors then took us to show us around. Gradually we did it ourselves. Everybody who comes here is glad to see that their children are educated properly, and will have a good future without communist oppression.

We came from Vietnam, crossed the vast sea and now it seems that we are alive again. Many people lost their lives at sea. I dare not think about the past too much. If we wanted to start a business as in the past, we do not have enought capital to start. I have registered and been waiting for the drilling course offered by Manpower. I do not know whether it will be coming up this October or not. I hope to study a skill.

I hope all Vietnamese children will get a good education, and that the young men will have a good future. We are fortunate to come to Canada. People who are still in Vietnam now are really experiencing a miserable life.

The Snow! How Beautiful It Was

Huynh, Van Hue

A lot of Vietnamese are trying to get out of their country even though they have to leave all the things they have.

Some of the families had to separate because they weren't sure that the plans for escape would be real or fake, or there was not enough money. Some parents sacrificed for the young people so that they could be the ones to get out of their homeland and be free of the communists.

I remember in June of 1979 the day I left Vietnam I didn't know what would happen to me, so I didn't say any farewell to my friends.

Early in the morning the sun was rising and I was feeling sorrow at getting ready to leave Vietnam with my sister to find freedom. I thought, from now on, I will be away from my native land forever. I grieved to leave my friends and the parents that I love so much.

First the Captain came to take us to a small town, Mytho, in South Vietnam. There were 500 people waiting together there. The next night, about 7 p.m., the Vietnamese Navy was coming to check the things that we were bringing with us. Each person that they named could get on the boat. The passage of each one cost about 6 oz. of gold for a child and about 12 oz. for an adult.

We spent four days and five nights in the boat that was 90 feet long and 16 feet wide. The way to Malaya was steered by a map and compass. On the way we met storms and two boatloads of sea pirates from Thailand. They wanted to come over to our boat but our captain said, "If we let them get on the boat we will lose all the things that we need. Even the ladies on the boat might be unsafe. So -- women, ladies and children, please get down to the bottom. Let the men on the top fight with the sea pirates." Finally we got

on our way without anything happening. Perhaps God saved our lives. We all reached Malaysia safely and stayed there for one night. Next day the Malay Navy required us to give them a further 12 oz. of gold. When we did this they would lead our boat to Indonesian refugee camps.

We were there about one year. We could have gone to Texas but we felt that we would be more secure in Canada and so waited for our names to move up the list. On April 22, 1980, we went to Singapore to wait for the plane. After a week we left for Canada. I knew from that day I had found the place where there was freedom. We are really happy, but the only snag in our happiness is that we left our relatives in Vietnam.

The first place I came to in Canada was Montreal. There were 500 of us and we lived in a barracks and stayed there for 3 days. After that some families went to Toronto, Edmonton, and Ottawa, or to other provinces. But I and my sister with some other families came to Halifax. When I arrived in Halifax I was so afraid to face a strange country, a country that I didn't know with people and languages that were different. After a week my sponsor took me to Saint Francis School and my sister went to English training school. First when I went to school I felt so terrible and discouraged because I didn't know what the teachers or my classmates were saying, therefore, I was scared of school. Finally I made up my mind and told myself that I must solve my problems in English, and then I began to learn hard and make friends.

Last winter was the first time I saw snow. How beautiful it was, so fresh. The whole world seemed to be covered with a white blanket. Oh -- I love it!

And here, one thing that I would like to remember and this is my help from Miss Lui of Human Rights and Mrs. Howard of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

The day we married ... the communists took over

Mr. and Mrs. Le, Quan Hung

When the Communist government took over South Vietnam they tried to control everything and repress everyone. All Vietnamese who lived in Vietnam wanted to escape. We, too, were in this position, so we tried to get away.

In January 1975, there was fighting all over Vietnam as the communists tried to take over Vietnam. Everyday they invaded further and further. At that time many people escaped by plane to the Island of Guam.

So we decided to get married and then try to escape. The very day that we married, the communists took over the country. It was too late to make our escape at this time.

In June 1976, a year and a half later, my friend suggested that we try again to escape by boat. Our baby girl was only three months old. Although we felt that our baby was still too young, we still decided to attempt to escape. We waited for a year, but nothing happened. We had already paid for our space in the boat. We were always preparing for the moment when word would come, that we would sail that night.

The man who was organizing the escape plan, did not seem to be sincere, so we asked for our money back. But we only got half of what we paid.

It was now July 1977 and the communists were repressing us more all the time.

In the spring of 1978, we tried to escape for a second time. My brother and his family were with us a this time.

About this time, I was sick so I had three days off. When my brother came to see us in the early evening, he said: "We are going to make our escape tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock". So I asked: "Is there room for my family?" He said, "yes, if you can make it." We were soon busy getting our clothing packed in an old basket. This was because we wanted the

communists to think that we had spent some time visting in the city and we were returning to our home in the country. For the same reason, we also wore our old clothing. There were few things that we could carry with us, and we had to hurry, because our ship was ready to go. We went to see my parents, brothers and sisters, because we might never see them again. There was no time to remove any valuables to my family's home. So we took what things we could carry and we asked my cousin to look after the house when we were gone.

At six in the morning on the following day, everything was ready for us to go. But my brother and his family couldn't come until 6:45 a.m.

I drove my motorcycle with my wife and daughter on the back. My brother, who was also escaping drove his motorcycle with his one and one-half year old son and his wife on the back. My two older brothers were with us to take back our motorcycle.

From our house to the appointed place was about 25 km. It was a small town, with a ferry for the people who lived in the country to transfer foods and supplies for living.

We got there at 7:45 a.m. We couldn't say anything to our two brothers before they left us. We were unhappy at the last minute. We could understand how my brothers were feeling so sad, but we pretended that everything was as usual, because of the communists who were around us. Our situation was highly dangerous before getting into the boat.

On our way to the ferry, we had to look for a gentleman, who organized the escape plan. We were disappointed, because we could not find him. He couldn't come at the right time. When he arrived we did not have time to ask him what had happened. In this position we didn't know what would take place in the next few minutes.

About 15 people who were in the escape plan, were waiting for him. It was only for one minute, but seemed as long as an hour.

At 8:30 everyone was in the boat. My brother helped to pilot so he started the motor. We moved slowly away from the shore.

We were in the boat around three hours. In the escape plan, we were to meet three other small boats at noon time. All the little boats were on time. From there we waited for the escape boat.

Five minutes had gone, 30 minutes passed than an hour went by. We didn't see anything. It was 1:30 when in the distance we saw something that looked like a boat. Soon we saw the large boat coming nearer and nearer. It was the same color as our boat. Our navigator said, "That could be our boat." How excited we were! Everybody gathered up their things and they were ready to jump aboard the escape boat. Our navigator suddenly veered the boat in the opposite direction. It was a communist boat! Everybody almost stopped breathing. How thankful we were that the communists didn't realize that we were trying to escape.

Everybody was so disappointed as they sank back in the boat hiding their pale faces, pulling their little ones to them. Yet, how happy we were to see that the communist boat had not turned away from its course to follow us!

But we were still hoping our escape boat would come. By 4 o'clock in the afternoon, we had transferred all the people to two boats, and one man in the third boat went back to discover what had happened to our escape boat.

After three hours he returned with bread and water plus "bad news". He told us: "Our boat is still at the ferry. It could not get out, because of the communists". He said for us to wait until 2 o'clock in the morning. But the boat did not arrive, so he told us to go back home, and try another time.

The boat landed us about 3 o'clock in the morning. For safety my wife and our baby girl went with my brother and his wife to their home, while I went a different way to our home.

After we got off the boat, I was very disappointed and nervous, because I had never gone this way and I had never heard of this place before. However, I tried hard so finally I found the way. Beside me were two boys, one was the son of the owner of the little boat, the other the son of my brother's friend. Following us were about 20 people. This put us in a highly dangerous position. So I told the two boys with me that we had to go as fast as we could, to get away from the crowd, because if the communists stopped us, it would be easier for us to explain why we were there.

We had gone about two or three miles, when we met a lady whom we asked: "Would you please help us to find the way to Phu Xuan town?" (Phu Xuan is the town where we had been on the morning before). She said, "Come along with me because I am going to Phu Xuan, too". We were going to the bus driver's house and it was nearly time for him to start his route, and we planned to ride on his bus. It was then 15 minutes to four in the morning.

The lady went ahead of us, leading the way to the bus driver's house, where the boys and I waited for the bus. We hid behind a tree, because we didn't want the people behind us to know that we were going on the bus.

Everyone went by, looking through the window. We saw the bus driver drinking his coffee and we knew that he would soon be ready. Besides us, about 10 people were on the small bus. By now it was 4:30 a.m. We felt our problems were almost over.

We were aboard the bus for a few hours. All of this time, we hadn't seen the group who were walking and we didn't know what had happened to them.

When we got off the bus, we were near the river, so we went down to wash our dirty faces, hands and feet.

Since we had not eaten all day and night, we hoped that we could find a restaurant to get breakfast and then go back home.

My older brother looked for us on the street and found us washing in the river.

How surprised and happy I was to see him! I wondered how he had ever found us!

Quickly my brother and I got on his motorcycle and sped back home. He said, "I have been so worried about you, for early yesterday morning I heard that the communists had captured the escape boat. So I came here and tried to find you I couldn't learn any news about you."

We planned another escape, that is four families totalling 33 people who were all relatives. We saved money to organize this escape with the help of some country people who took charge of transferring us because they were more familiar with the route. We hid in the house of a woman for three days, after coming in groups of three to four persons. Gradually there were 16 people in a small room, under a tin roof in unbearable tropical heat. We co-operated with the hostess who had many acquaintances and relatives who were communist cadres who came and went frequently. That made us nervous every minute. We did not make a sound for three days and prayed that the children wouldn't cry. We were very lucky.

We boarded a vessel, three to four people each time, and sailed out to a small boat which took us to the larger one waiting for us further out in the sea. We encountered heavy rain and strong winds after boarding the larger boat. Fortunately, all 33 of us safely boarded the boat which was 13 meters by 2.8 meters wide. We turned off all the lights to sail in the dark of the night. We avoided using lights because there were communist fishing boats around. We felt excited and fearful.

We had brought some live chickens which we made as offerings to thank our departed ancestors that we had successfully escaped.

The second day we entered the Gulf of Thailand when a boat came from the coast toward us. Pirates from the boat swam to our vessel. After climbing on board, they hit the pilot and my brother.

They stripped us of our belongings, wrist watches, clothes, luggage, shoes and food. They forced us to their ship, so they could search everybody as well as raid every corner of the boat.

After they had taken whatever was valuable, we requested a compass and an old watch to continue our trip. Since they used hammers, knives to drill and dig our boat in search for gold, our boat started leaking heavily.

That afternoon we encountered another pirate boat, in fact three boats confronted us. We met the same pirate boat that had robbed us that morning too. They gave a signal to the other boat which meant "we did this boat this morning now you can proceed. It's your turn". So they approached us. They asked my uncle to come to their boat to negotiate.

(Mrs. Le) The pirates said that they knew there was a storm coming and "because of humanity, we will not let you go". They said: "If you have some gold we will lead you to the refugee camp". After being robbed this morning we did not have much left, but a few people had rings that they managed to hide. With this contribution they promised to tow our boat.

(Mr. Le) The pirates left us in international waters. We sailed towards the Malaysian coast. When we were about to arrive at Trengganu, villagers came out and threw stones at us, shouting, "Chou, chou". In Cantonese this means "go away". Later, the Malaysian army came out. They took three of our people to their boat as hostages and forcefully towed our boat to sea. After, they left us in the vast sea. We came to an island and we managed to find our way back. Malaysian soldiers who guarded it tried to stop us. They fired at us but we wouldn't stop.

The soldiers boarded, slashed, beat, and kicked the men. They shouted, "Nobody can get off". All young men must get down and push the boat back to the sea". So we came to a sandy island. The second day, they told us that our boat was missing. We said to ourselves "That's okay, we don't have to go again." But we didn't know that they had other tricks.

Those days on this island, we did not have anything to eat. We were so hungry. We ate only leaves and ripened coconut. Everybody got diarrhea. Then we would see other refugee boats arrive, be arrested and towed away to the sea.

During the nine days, navy officials came. They said, "Be prepared to leave". They gave us a boat. Everybody got half a bowl of rice. It was the only rice we had in nine days. When everybody was aboard, they said they would tow us to a refugee camp. We doubted it. Together with other refugee boats they towed us towards the sea. From morning to evening, we saw nothing, not a sign of land or a refugee camp. Then they admitted that they were towing us to Indonesia. The next morning they showed us the direction to go, then cut the chain. Our boat did not work. The other refugee boat had to tow us. We saw nothing, neither a piece of land nor a ship, until four o'clock in the afternoon when we saw a fuel tanker sailing toward the Philippines. Everybody shouted to be rescued. First the ship passed by, despite our desperate cries. Later, because of their humanitarian feelings, they returned. They said they would give us food, water and fuel but they would not take us.

Finally, they agreed to tow us. We returned to the Malaysian coast. As soon as we set foot on shore we all fell, lying on the beach. We were all feeling anguish and exhaustion. Here, the villagers could not help but feel pity for us. The village guards enclosed us with barbed wire and we were not allowed to walk out of the enclosure.

The first day we didn't have anything to eat. The next day, village fishermen gave us a basket of fish. We ate all the fish. Then the villagers learned that we did not have rice so next day, they brought some, along with biscuits.

After 10 days on the beach we were delivered to a house on the dock. One day Malaysian police brought a boat and asked us to board the boat. We refused, because we felt horrified by the thought of going to sea again. We discussed, amongst ourselves, that no matter what pressure they put upon us, we would not board a boat again. They towed back two boats, and told us to board them. Our group of 43 joined another

group of 400 people. That afternoon when they tried to force us aboard, we insisted on staying. They shouted, "move, move", wielding their automatic rifles to beat us.

We had planned to let the men stay in the middle with women and children in the circle outside. They could not catch the men and could do nothing with women and children. After a period of beating and pulling they could not move us. The other group left but seven of them sneaked back to join our group. The people from our group who could not endure the beating, joined the other group and left.

One day the Malaysian police brought some trucks and said, "Now go, go to the refugee camp by truck". Before we had decided that we would go to the camp only by land, not by boat. But we were still suspicious. We agreed amongst ourselves that if they took us to a beach, and if we caught sight of a boat we would not get off. We would remain on the truck.

Finally, we saw a row of low, metal-roofed houses with people, figures like us, and we knew it was really a refugee camp. We were extremely happy, because being admitted to the refugee camp meant the end of the most terrible nightmare!

After staying in the refugee camp for awhile we were eager to leave because of the unhealthy conditions and malnutrition there.

I applied to come to Canada although I didn't care which country I went to because I sought freedom.

(Mrs. Le) There was gossip in the refugee camp that Canada is a cold place, where people work for half the year and rest for the remainder.

We came and I like it here. We should have faith, struggle and learn new things.

(Mr. Le) On the plane, flying from Montreal to Halifax, I wept a lot. I wept because I was deeply worried. More than 200 people from refugee camps were aboard the same airplane, but we were the only family sent to Yarmouth.

When we arrived, we were met by Mr. LeBlanc at the airport. He said, "We are here to help you". We received a lot of help from him as did the other refugee families. When we first arrived it was winter time. We missed our home, our friends and relatives. We wept every night and we thought that we would move to elsewhere when we had enough money.

(Mrs. Le) Mr. LeBlanc was my first friend in Canada and we have friends among our sponsors. We are grateful. Eight months after we came here, we could fully support ourselves. Now every year we shall celebrate our arrival anniversary, and invite our sponsors with our friends for a dinner of Vietnamese food.

(Mr. Le) Of course, the culture and customs are very different from those of Vietnam. Yet, living in harmony depends on how we accept the way of life here. If we insist upon our way, we will find great difficulty.

Among the differences are the way that people socialize here. It is more delicate and courteous. At first, you feel that the way they behave is natural, but in fact they are very courteous, which I want to learn from them.

I met Canadians who were angry or furious, but would cover this with a smile and politeness; they are sensitive. On the other hand, I think that our people are more sentimental and our relationships are closer. The sentiment here is plainer. Maybe that is due to the weather. In Vietnam we had an emotional, close neighbourhood. We left the door open all the time. One can walk by, see things in the houses, pop in, walk in anytime and say "hello"! Here the doors are closed all of the time. That sometimes makes me feel separated.

In Vietnam the whole society rejoices, and lives in harmony with the community and relatives. I believe that Nova Scotians live closely only with their immediate family. So life is separated and one is closer to one's own family.

I think we should learn to integrate with the local customs and habits. We would be let alone if we insist upon our

way of life.

We have been here for three years but have yet to get to know our neighbours. We invited a lady who lives alone to come to our arrival anniversary, but she did not and we think that she leads a very lonely life. I am surprised to see that.

A Russian ship ...towed us back to Vietnam

Ly, Vi

I am 28 years old, I came here with my wife and two daughters, the older one is five years old and the younger is four years old.

I finished school when I was fifteen years old, and started to be an apprentice to learn about machines. When I was seventeen I was running machines by myself. When I was twenty I applied to the Vietnamese Government Army Department and worked for them. I did not have to join the army, but the reason why I worked for the army department was so that I would not be conscripted to fight as a soldier. After April 1975, I worked as a machinist at home.

In 1977 I already had planned to leave the country with my friend, but I could not, so I waited until 1979. The night I left my country, I was on the boat, and the weather was fine, but in the middle of the sea, my boat broke down, so all of the mechanics fixed it up. After we had fixed the boat we continued. On the seventh day we met a Russian boat and they towed our boat to Vietnam again. We changed to another boat, and left for the second time. We went for four days and arrived at Indonesia Island. There were no people on this island and it was terrible. We stayed there and on the second day, fortunately, we met the Indonesian Red Cross who had come past. They registered us, and we lived in a refugee camp for five and a half months.

I was sponsored by the Canadian Martyr Church. They welcomed us at the airport and we were taken to this apartment which was already rented for us. The Chinese students and our sponsors had decorated it. Chinese students interpreted for us. The Chinese students and our sponsors held a welcoming party for us. My sponsors brought us to a Manpower English training course. About two weeks later, they found a job for me in a machine factory. In this factory, I was the only Chinese and the rest are all Canadian. This factory trained me for four months, after that term they believed I could

do the work so I continued working there until now. The sponsors and the Chinese students helped my family a lot, so we are very thankful for their help.

Our Ancestors' Graves are There

Ngo, Van Thuong

I left Vietnam in December 20. 1978, that was about two months after I finished my teacher training course. I had to use a false paper carrying a Chinese name to leave. This was my second escape, the first time was in 1954 when my family escaped from the Ho Chi Minh Communist regime to the South, with other Roman Catholic families.

I arrived in Canada on June 27, 1979. I met my wife in Halifax and we got married here. We held the ceremony according to Vietnamese custom, before our ancestors' shrine. I was supposed to have a church ceremony according to my religion, but since I was so busy, we just held a simple ceremony at home and I went to work the following day. We took no honeymoon. Now my father and mother-in-law live with me, and we are all working.

I don't feel conflict here about culture and beliefs because I am a Roman Catholic. I see Canadians are more religious. The difference is in Vietnam you have to go to the church on Sunday, no matter if you have gone there on a week day. But in Canada you have more choice, you can go on the weekday instead of Sunday if you don't have time. Other things such as rituals are the same.

In Vietnam some families had a Christian shrine as well as an ancestral shrine beside it, that might be because two persons in the family have different beliefs. For example, perhaps the husband was a Christian and the wife still kept worshipping her ancestors and practiced Buddhism for her spiritual life. I believe in only one religion.

Like many other people, when my wife's family first came here they faced the problem of language, the second problem was getting a job. In spite of the fact that some of us were skilled workers before, we still faced the difficulty of getting a job. My wife's family had more than ten years' experience of embroidering, but when we first came here, we were faced with the problem that embroidering

was not popular yet. Another thing is we want to set up our own business but we lack capital. If we had our own capital we would start our own business and make it as good as a Canadain business.

I want to have my own business. Even though I am learning engineering now, I may not follow that career. This is a capitalist society, one has freedom, one is free to expand, free to do business, free to do everything, so why not do that? If you have the ability, then you have the right to succeed.

Generally I like Halifax, in this region it is not difficult to make a living, its business is still developing. In Edmonton or other bigger cities, the competition is tougher. I observe Canadians tend to keep working for someone else all their lives. In Vietnam many workers would tend to save money and sometimes develop their own business. The people who left Vietnam have more enterprise, energy, and are competitive enough to survive.

I would like to mention the difference in education between Vietnam and here. In Vietnam the students were passive while the teachers were active. As I was teaching in Vietnam I knew that. In class the teacher prepared the teaching plan, explaining and doing everything, the student just sat there and took in as much as he could. Here in Canada the situation is just reversed, the students are active and the teacher just goes on explaining briefly, so the student must seek more understanding himself. Some teachers are impatient, if you wait five or ten minutes after the class to ask something you still don't understand, they want to get away. I think that would be due to the Canadian way of working for so many hours.

In Vietnam the traditional teacher-student relationship is closer. The teachers are more traditional. Things such as students smoking in class, putting their legs on the table, etc. would not happen in Vietnam, even in university, where students are more free and independent.

I admire the Canadian way of education to equip the student with a knowledge of science and technology from an early age. They are encouraged to be self-motivated. I was surprised to see a nine-year-old Canadian child in a library. He was looking for books about astronomy, xeroxing, doing everything like an adult. A Vietnamese university student would be studying in the library only because he wants to pass the exam, not because he wants to broaden his knowledge.

About relationships between people in Canada, it is not as close as it was in Vietnam. An example is that here two friends would help each other, but there is a limit; they would stay away from financial matters. In Vietnam it is different, two intimate friends would help with all their hearts in every matter, including money. So far, in my experience in Canada, there is a limit to friendship.

I still like my country of Vietnam first, Canada second. I grew up there and have an emotional bond to it. I lost my country and came as a refugee to Canada to make a better living within the freedom of this country. But my parents, my relatives, and ancestors' graves are there. If conditions would permit it, I would return there.

Though I am applying to sponsor my parents to immigrate here, I see other old Vietnamese people are getting very lonely here. I have talked to them and they are lonely. The weather is hard for them and the language is still a big barrier.

Kim Van Kieu

Nguyen, Du

The Kim Van Kieu is Vietnam's best-known and best-loved epic poem. It was written by Nguyen Du, a Vietnamese scholar-mandarin-diplomat born in 1765 to a family of mandarins. The poem has crossed political and generation barriers and remains today the most often quoted literary work in Vietnam.

The plot is based on an ancient Chinese story. The title combines the names of the three central characters: Thuy Kieu, the heroine, Kim Trong, her beloved, and Thuy Van, her sister. Thuy Kieu, a gentle beauty living in the sixteenth century, renounced her love for Kim Trong, and sold herself into prostitution in order to save her family's finances and honor. Her life became a succession of misfortune and betrayals.

Fifteen years after the family tragedy forced her to become a courtesan, the once beautiful Kieu found refuge in a Buddhist temple. There, she was discovered by Kim, her boyhood suitor, who had been roaming the country looking for her. Despite Kim's marriage to Kieu's younger sister Thuy Van, his feeling toward his first love remained unchanged and he dutifully asked Kieu to become his second wife. But Kieu knew herself to be but "a stained flower" and pleaded with Kim not to "try to recover the perfume that has been dropped on the ground." Reluctantly, they both agreed that marriage would be unwise, and they vowed to remain friends for life.

The night
wore on; the moon at is Zenith, but still
not half of what they wished to say
had been said of all their suffering,
all their joy; loose cords
that held back bed curtains fell
and in the gentle lamplight, her
curves seemed rounder, her color

fresher, so did old lovers meet again,
the flower that once had blossomed
and the bee that had lit upon it
happy once more together!

Kieu becoming serious again, said,
"As for my own self, it is of no consequence
this useless body is of small use
to you; I am grateful that you
have remembered our past love and
show me your favor still; now
in a small way I have complied
with your desire, yet at heart
am I already ashamed; after all
I have done, surely I am no longer
good to look at! In future
best should we, for the sake
of honor keep our love on the level
of simple good friendship,
for should you try to recover the
perfume that has dropped
on the ground, or search
for a flower when the season
is over, so will you draw notice
to my shame, and then maybe
hatred will supplant the love
our very faithfulness has wrought us
harm! Now, should you be anxious
for your posterity, my sister
is with you; there is no need
to rely on me; hereafter the best way
I can be true to you,
is in thoughtful friendship:
you should help me in this rather
than crush my resolve underfoot:
we are bound by much, but for you
there can be but little interest
in a fading flower;"
Kim replied,

"We pledged ourselves to each other,
suddenly we were separated, as
fish from water, as birds
from the sky; your absence has given me
deep suffering; I am sure that after
all the promises exchanged, you too
have suffered equally; through life
and death we swore to maintain
our love; now as we meet again
we must make each other happy,
bringing fullness to our love:
you, still graceful, supple, like
a willow, young and green; how now
can we two not taste of all
that our union brings? For me
I know that the mirror of your soul
is pure and unstained by the dust
of the world: all through the years
has my love for you but deepened
ever searching for you, even though
it has been like the hopeless groping
for a needle at the bottom of the sea!
It is because of this great love
engraved as it is so deeply in all
we treasure, rather than to any thought
of lightness, that I ever dared
to go on hoping somehow we two
would come together once more! surely
in the face of all of this, it is
unnecessary we share the same bed
to be counted husband and wife!"

With these words, did Kieu
putting her gown straight, arranging
her hair, bow low before him,
expressing her gratitude, saying
"Should now in my remaining days
that side of our love be removed
it will be due to your nobility
so high above that of ordinary folk;
what you have said comes from your

inmost being! our understanding
is sincere and full; now you have
thought much for my welfare, protecting me
restoring my life its dignity!"

We keep our traditions

Nguyen, Hung Tan

I came here in April 1980. I was political officer in the South Vietnamese army. I had attempted to escape twice before I succeeded.

When I left Vietnam, our only aim was to leave Vietnam. We did not have any idea of which country to go to. We were robbed by pirates. They robbed us of everything, including the engine in our boat. We were rescued by a larger ship. The Canadian government admitted all of us, including my brother's family, and my younger brother.

We were really scared by what we heard in the refugee camp. We imagined that Canada was a terribly cold place. Now we have gone through a winter, and we found we could quickly adjust to it. It is not as terrible as we had imagined.

Generally, we did not have much difficulty in adjusting to our new life here. Our sponsors are nice people, our English teacher helped us with all her heart. The difficulty for us is to find a job. About ten families have left Cape Breton for the West to find employment there. We like this place very much. It is a small place, the people are nice, when we are out on the street, almost everybody knows us and is our friend.

Some Vietnamese families have settled in small communities. They are lonely; I often go to visit them, and they are happy when I come.

I think our advantage is that we still can retain our traditions while we integrate into Canadian society. That means we associate with Canadians very well, but when we Vietnamese get together we attempt to promote our traditions, and customs. Here our English teachers have organized a few picnics with our Canadian sponsors, and friends. There are not many Vietnamese families in Cape Breton, about two dozen perhaps, but we have attempted to organize our New Year's celebration. We have a dragon dance, a Vietnamese martial art performance

and a Kitchen God play. The audience really enjoys these presentations. After that we had a Canadian social dance.

We often make Vietnamese food and invite Canadian friends and sponsors for dinner and they enjoy it very much and we have a good time. We talk about the Vietnamese and Canadian history, we sing Vietnamese songs and in return they sing Canadian songs. These are cases of an inter-change of culture and multiculturalism.

I am thirty-one now. There are mostly male Vietnamese here in Cape Breton, so it is difficult to find a Vietnamese girl to marry. We would like it very much if the Canadian government would admit more Vietnamese girls to this area.

I am not sure what I am going to do in the next few years or what I am dreaming of. I was a medical student before I joined the army of the Republic of Vietnam. In high school I studied drafting and I worked part-time as a drafting mechanic when I was in university. I hope Manpower can help me find a job as a draftsman.

... *a long nightmare*

Nguyen, Khac Hieu

I was born in 1949. My father died when I was 6 years old, and my mother worked hard to raise the family. I was admitted to a technical high school after an entrance examination. Because my family was poor, the school supplied me with free boarding. I graduated from technical high school and was admitted to a senior secondary technical school and then Polytechnique University in Saigon with several scholarships. (such as U.S. Aid, and one from Shell Oil Limited). With these scholarships and summer jobs I finished my technical training. After graduation I was trained to be an army officer and than a communications officer. Not long after that the war was over, the communists won their victory and took over South Vietnam.

When I was a student we used to demonstrate to protest against the war. We had freedom, and independence at that time, and we could express what we thought. We saw that the war was absurd. Young people like me, who were essential to the future, were being sacrificed, and it was our countryside that was being bombed. After joining the army, I felt I had a responsibility as a citizen, but we just had to take orders from our superiors. We were submissive and our attitude was the opposite to that we held when we were students.

The American allies had come to help Vietnam fight communism. This was right but besides that they brought many side effects that were not good, such as the corruption of the traditional values of our society, as well as wide spread bombing.

I was drafted to a re-education camp in 1976. We, the prisoners were told to stay in the camp to be instructed for ten days. It turned out to be a long nightmare for many people. I myself spent three and one-half years going from one labor camp to another. We were sent to a camp with more than 10,000 people including former army officers, doctors, engineers and technicians who did not directly fight in the war. Later

they sent us to a place near the Cambodian border. I still remember the night when we arrived; it was cold and raining heavily and we had to sit sleeping in the clearing until the next day. Then we walked through the jungle to get to the destination to which we were assigned.

We were ordered by the communist cadres to clear the jungle, and build straw huts and plant everything by manual labour. I well remember those days! This was hard work, and we lacked food and medicine. There were a lot of poisonous snakes and small insects in the bush, and if you wanted to walk in the bush at night you needed to get a stick and strike around to scare the snakes and insects away.

After three and one-half years in the camp they released most people in my group, made up of the reserve officers, but an order detained me to serve the government because of my profession. I wanted to go home to be united with my family but they didn't give me a paper so I wasn't allowed to leave. I was assigned to a machinery department in a farming area, I did not practice my profession as a technician there, but I sometimes helped the mechanics do the farming and other things. One day there was an accident, which has changed my life. A guy drove a forklift and hit my leg. It took an hour to free me and then I was finally taken to the hospital. I had a fracture at the tibia. They didn't do anything except bind my leg with plaster. After several months in hospital, I managed to go home, and tried my first escape from the country.

I attempted to escape with my leg still in a cast and had to walk on my crutches. A vessel brought us out to the sea, to a place where a boat was supposed to be there to pick us up. But the boat was not there at the time. The fuel in our vessel was about to run short, so we decided to return ashore. We were afraid we would be seized by communist cadres so everybody ran in every direction as soon as the vessel landed. I could not run and I limped on the crutch for a mile at midnight along the bank and fell down several times. Later my cousin drove a vessel to pick me up to go home. We were six miles away from my home in the countryside.

ships came to order us to leave Chinese territory, we just ignored them. Finally through an interpreter, we were able to trade our wrist watches in exchange for fuel, water and food. Then we continued our trip. After we got out to sea we met a thunderstorm and had to go ashore again. This time it was another place (also on Hainan island). In this place there were security police who ordered us to leave immediately, but fortunately they allowed us to stay over one night in our boat.

The next day we went out to sea and ran into a tropical storm. Alas! we thought we would die. There were heavy rains, and thunderstorms and it was cold. With a great deal of effort and luck we got ashore to the Chinese province of Kwantung, where we were taken care of and the people were nice. We took refuge there for ten days and then went to Hong Kong.

After coming to Canada I did not have a language problem, I could speak English and understand it well and the adjustment to food and customs did not appear hard for me either. I did not encounter discrimination, as people in the neighborhood are really nice here. They greeted us the first time we met even though we didn't know each other.

Before I left Vietnam, my family, friends and I knew that Canada was a nice place to go to. It is a peaceful country, although the weather is cold but the society is steady, secure, and not crowded. So, I already had the idea to come to Canada. After an interview my application was accepted and then they transfered me to another transit camp. My friend Dao whom I knew in the refugee camp arrived in Bridgewater first, he gave my name to the Holy Trinity Anglican Church and they later sponsored me to come to Bridgewater.

Within my one year in Canada I had a chance to travel to many places in Central Canada; Ontario, Quebec and around Nova Scotia. I do not have a definite idea of where I am going to settle. Nova Scotia has the advantage of milder weather. In the future my permanent settlement will be according to my job, or establishing a family. My new Canadian friends and sponsors are very nice people. They help me with all their hearts. The only thing is that I came here alone and

Later I was able sucessfully to leave Vietnam. The interesting thing about my last and successful escape is that a boat owner hired me as a pilot and I don't know much about sailing. I was in the communications department in the army and not in the navy.

I learned from my friends, former navy officers, about navigation, such as how to use the chart, magnetic compass and how to measure the speed of the boat. I practiced immediately after studying the theories.

We intended to cross the South China Sea and go straight to the Philippines, later we decided to go north to sail towards Hong Kong along the China coast. Thus if we ran short of food and fuel we could get help. We met many ships on the way and asked for help but nobody bothered to help us.

One day we saw two blackspots in the distance, and the next day as we approached we found they were ships from the Chinese navy that had been damaged in an earlier dispute with Vietnam. We had arrived in the Paracel Islands about 400 kilometers east of Vietnam's central coast. There, a confrontation between Vietnam and China had taken place in 1972.

At this time the people in our boat split into two groups, one group insisted on continuing the trip. The other group, mainly older people and women wanted to go home but they were also afraid the communists would catch them. So I advised them to continue the trip.

The next day we arrived in Hainan Island, which belongs to China. We wanted water but we couldn't communicate with the people there. After a period of gesturing they understood what we needed and gave us water. It was so wonderful to drink as much water as we liked at this time, as all of us had been thirsty for many days. We all went to sleep and planned to continue the trip the next day.

We also required more fuel and food for our trip but we couldn't get it. So we followed a Chinese boat to get into the harbour in order to get fuel, food and water somewhere. Even though they signalled us to leave immediately, and more Chinese

very often miss my parents, brother, sister and friends in my homeland.

I would compare the life here with that in Saigon before the communists took over. Generally here it is more convenience, with ample supplies of everything, but there are elements of our life in Saigon that I miss, such as a feeling of closeness, familiar faces, customs and food. I don't find these here and I long for them. It is hard to compare Canada and Vietnam.

There are some things of Vietnamese culture that I think we should preserve, such as the traditional dress, the Ao Dai. It is elegant and gracious. If we can, we should teach the Vietnamese children Vietnamese literature, history and the fact that Vietnam has had four thousand years of civilization.

It is sad to find Vietnamese children lacking the basic knowledge of Vietnam. I think for Canada to have a multicultural policy is a good idea. I want to contribute my efforts to help the Vietnamese community here to promote our cultural traditions, and preserve our values.

The problem that we have, and it is hard to solve, is marriage. I would not discriminate between Vietnamese, Canadian, Chinese or whatever. It is crucial to marry a person who will love you and you will love.

To run away was dangerous

Nguyen, Phuc

My family has four members. My name is Phuc, my wife is Suong, my daughter is Diem, my nephew is Hien. We are Vietnamese and all of us were born in Vietnam. We lived in Saigon, and I have many fond memories and had many good friends there. I love my fatherland. I did everything for my country to become rich and beautiful.

When the communists began to fight the war and invade my country I adhered to the Republic of Vietnam's force to protect our freedom, to protect the Vietnamese tradition.

In 1975, the Republic of Vietnam's force was defeated. My country was lost, I had no land. I had nothing to live on. There were many reasons that I couldn't kill myself. I couldn't continue to fight with so much heartache and I decided to run away, but to run away was difficult and dangerous for me. I spent more than three years building the boat, finding the way to go through the iron curtain to come here.

I left Vietnam by my boat with my family on January 25, 1980. When our boat came near Thailand's coast I met many pirates. They did very cruel acts. They hit me very hard. They used tyranny to take everything from my boat such as money, clothes, the engine, boat compass, map, binoculars. They destroyed all the things which they didn't need or couldn't take away such as food, water, oil and personal possessions. Then, they towed my boat to the middle of the ocean. While the wind blew fast, the seas were high and my boat was capsized easily. Almost all of us felt desperate and lay to wait for death. A few of us tried to control the boat. I hurried to make a sail for the boat and was able to sail it to Thailand's shore. After more than a long, hard day we were saved by the ship S.S. Akuma. All of us were very happy and moved to tears.

I arrived in Thailand on February 14, 1980. There, I was ashamed to live as a man without a nation. Then the Canadian government permitted and helped me to come to Canada. I arrived in Sydney on May 10, 1980. Here, I have received much assistance and kindness from many Sydney people.

My English ability is very weak. The customs are different between the two nations. My life changes very fast. I have nothing. I have no financial ability. Therefore, I cannot do anything to show my gratitude to the people who helped me.

I thank God very much, who showed the way for me, who led me through the iron curtain, who gave me this big beautiful, rich country, who gave me Canadian friends with their charity.

I thank all people in the S.S. Akuma, who saved my life in the ocean.

I thank my English teacher who teaches word by word, sentence by sentence in order for me to have the basic English ability to understand common things in the new land.

I thank all my sponsors, the people in Sydney, and the government of Canada for such a good, new life.

I hope I will always be faithful to Vietnam. At the same time I also hope Canada will become my second native land. I will always try to be a good citizen of this big, beautiful, rich country, in peace as well as war.

Our Parents Didn't Know Of Our Escape

Nguyen, Thu Thi

My husband Paul was born in 1954 in Ben-Tre. It is a small province in the Mekong delta, but he grew up in My-Tho province. I was born in 1956. Paul's grandparents came from a fishing family. After a period the communists came and then we felt security was bad. Both of our families moved to My-Tho province, but when my husband went to fish he had to go down to the coast at Binh-Dai, and about once or twice a month he came home. My husband went to fish with his father, brothers and friends. The life of the fishermen is such that every time they went the day of their return was never certain.

We were married shortly befor the communists took over in 1975. After I was married I lived in the house next to my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law was a devoted Buddhist, she went to the temple twice a month, but I didn't have any religion because I was too young. I just burnt a stick of incense and said prayers every evening. When my husband went to fish, everyday I went down to the countryside to buy some farm products and sell them in the town market.

My husband still kept fishing on the boat. When the communists came, they still let us continue fishing but we had to sign a contract with them to sell all our products to them in exchange for supplies of fuel. Then the communists organized us into groups so that they could control us. I often heard stories of escaping. Usually the big boat escaped but from small boats the communist security guards used their guns to shoot at the escaping boat. These kinds of events happened frequently on the sea.

The communists wanted to conscript my husband into the army to do hard labor. His parents worried very much. The problem was, on his I. D. card his age was younger than his real age, but we could not do anything about it. They sent a paper asking my husband to have a physical examination. That meant he couldn't go out fishing and so he just stayed home feeling resentment against the communists. So we decided to leave the country.

When we left, we dared not let our parents know, we just left a letter for our family. If we told our family we feared that they would not let us go. On the day we left my mother-in-law asked me where we were going and I replied that I was taking the children to my mother's home. My mother-in-law didn't suspect anything.

It took us seventeen days to sail from Vietnam to Indonesia, a trip that normally would only take four days. We came close to Malaysia. The Navy towed our boat back to the sea.

Originally our boat just had twenty four people but when we were towed by the Malaysian navy they sent another forty one people to our boat. We came to the Indonesian coast. Initially the Indonesians didn't allow us to go to their island and told us there was another island refugee camp better than on their island, but our boat master didn't believe them. Later, we gave them some money and the Indonesians let us land.

I left Vietnam on April 23, 1979 and we arrived in Canada on October 29, 1979. Initially I didn't intend to come to Canada, I had Australia in my mind because the climate was good for us there, but in the end we had waited in the camp too long. When the Canadian immigration officers came to our camp, we applied to come to Canada and we were admitted.

We were supposed to fly three weeks after we made an application. Unfortunately at that time there was a big storm so all the planes were delayed. In the meantime my baby was due and I gave birth to my second son in the camp. After another month, we flew to Canada. My older son is three and one-half years old, and the younger one is one and one-half years old.

I was sponsored by a Catholic parish. The Manpower officer arranged for my husband to work in a fish plant and I am looking for a job now. His salary is sufficient but we hope I can work to increase our income. We hope we can buy a car.

English is difficult for us, because in Vietnam I did not have a chance to go to school much, so studying English is more difficult for me. Now after finishing the English as a Second Language course, I study at home by myself. I look up words in the dictionary a lot.

My sponsors found this house where I live now. Compared to many friends' the rent is cheaper and my sponsors live close to us. They are very nice people. They still help us a lot and in many ways, for instance, they drive my children to doctor's appointments, and explain the documents that are sent by the government or other angencies to us.

Recipes

By Mrs. Nguyen, Suong Dao, Sydney

CRAB SOUP

Ingredients:
- 2 cans of crab
- 4 or 5oz. tapioca
- 2½ lbs. pork bones
- 2 eggs
- 1 onion
- 3 green onions
- a little black pepper, sugar, salt
- a few celery leaves
- 1 tsp MSG
- almost 1 spoon of fish sauce
- 3 tblsp. oil

Method:
- -Clean pork bones. Put in a pot with 5 big bowls of cold water.
- -Add a little salt, and 1 little onion (cut thin). Put on high heat.
- -When water is very hot, turn down to medium for about 1½ - 2 hours.
- -Take off the heat and strain the broth. You need about 2½ bowls. If there isn't enough broth, add cold water to make 2½ bowls.
- -Put tapioca pearls in cold water about 20 min. before you put in broth.
- -Cut onion, green onion, celery leaves, thin.
- -Put oil into the fry pan or wok. When hot, put in onions for a few minutes. Add the crab and add fish sauce, pepper, sugar, MSG, and mix for about 3 minutes. Then take off the heat.
- -Put the broth in the pot again and heat. When hot, put in the crab and cook for 2 minutes. Then put in the tapioca for about 4 min.
- -Next, add 2 eggs and stir a few minutes. Take off the heat and put in green onion and celery leaves.

Serve with a small bowl of soy sauce of lemon, if you like.

RICE WITH CHICKEN (Com tay cam)

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. chicken (take out bones)
- 1 whole cocoanut
- 1 lb. pork bone
- 1 lb. rice
- 3 oz. dry mushroom
- 1 big onion
- -a little pepper, salt
- -1 piece garlic
- -3 spoons oil
- -1 big spoon fish sauce

Method:

-Clean pork bone, put in a pot with 3 bowls of water, a little salt, MSG, Simmer. When finished strain the broth-you need 3 small bowls. (For 1½ bowls rice you need 2½ bowls broth and 1 bowl cocoanut milk.)
-Take out chicken bones and cut thin and square shaped pieces.
-Put dry mushrooms in a little hot water, for about 30 min. before you cut thin and square-shaped.
-Cut onion thin and square-shaped.
-Drain the milk from the cocoanut (by squeezing out the milk)
-Put oil in pan, when hot put in 3 big spoons oil. Then add chopped garlic and onion. Cook for a few minutes then add chicken and cook about 5 min. Add dry mushroom and put in a little salt, pepper, MSG, and 1 spoon fish sauce. Cook for about 3 min. and then take out.
-Clean rice and put in the broth. Cook. When the broth is almost gone add the cocoanut milk and cook over medium heat. When the cocoanut milk is gone, put in the chicken and stir over heat for about 10 min. and then take out.
-Eat with soy sauce if you like.

CHICKEN SOUP

Ingredients:

- 2 or 3 green onions
- celery leaves
- 1 lb. chicken
- ½ lb. tofu
- -a little sugar, salt pepper
- -almost 1 spoon of fish sauce, if 1 bowl broth

CHICKEN SOUP (con't)

Ingredients:

1 cauliflower
2 oz. mung bean thread
½ pkg. fresh mushrooms or dry mushrooms
1 lb. pork bones
1 tsp. MSG
-3 tblsp. oil
-1 onion

Method:

-Clean pork and chicken bones with cold water and then put them in the pot with 5 big bowls water, a little salt, and a little onion, cut thin.
-Put on high heat and when the water is very hot, turn to med. heat.
-After about 30 min. take out chicken. Cook pork bones about 1½-2 hrs.
-Then, strain the broth, you need about 3½ bowls to serve 6 people.
-Slice chicken, onion, cauliflower, dry (or fresh) mushrooms.
-Put the mung bean thread in cold water for about 20 min. before you cut. Then cut mung bean thread into pieces about 1" long
-Cut a medium size piece of tofu.
-Put 3 tblsp. oil in the pan (or wok). When the oil is hot, put in the onions for a few minutes. Then, add sliced chicken, mushrooms, cauliflower, fish sauce, MSG, pepper, and sugar. Stir-fry for about 4 minutes-then take off the heat.
-Put the broth in the pot again. When hot, put in fried tofu for about 3 min. Then, add chicken, mushrooms, cauliflower, and cook for about 5 min. Then, add mung bean thread and cook for a few minutes.
-Take off the heat and add green onions and celery leaves
-Serve with a small bowl of soy sauce

Fried Tofu: In Vietnam, the tofu is not fried first, but in Canada the tofu tastes better if it is fried before you put it in the soup.
-Put a lot of oil in the pan with a clove of garlic. When the garlic is yellow, take it out. Put in the tofu. Fry for about 4 minutes.

VIETNAMESE PANCAKE

Ingredients:

2 lb. rice flour
1 cocoanut
1 pound mung bean
1 pound pork leg
1 pound frozen shrimp
3 eggs
1 medium spoon turmeric curcuma
oil (1 med. spoon for 1 pancake)
½ kg. bean sprouts
a little sugar, salt
3 pieces green onion,
1 piece garlic
1 big onion
salad

Method:

-Put pork leg in a pot with water and cook for about 25 min.
-Fry forzen shrimp with 3 spoon oil and 1 piece garlic for 10 min.
-Clean mung beans (after they have soaked a long time in cold water) then grind them in a blender.
-Clean cocoanut (if 1 bowl rice flour, you need 1 bowl cocoanut milk)
-Stir rice flour, cocoanut milk, mung beans, 3 eggs, turmeric curcuma, salt, sugar, and green onions (cut thin).
-Put wok on heat, when it's very hot, put in the oil. Add a little onion (if you like).
-Then, put in 1 small bowl pancake mixture over low heat. Put 8 or 10 pieces of pork (cut thin) and a little shrimp on top of pancake. Cook for about 5 -7 min. and take out when it is yellow colour.
-Serve with fish sauce, salad, and beer! (if you like)

Fish Sauce: 1 spoon fish sauce; 1½ spoon sugar; 1 spoon vinegar or lemon; 1 big carrot; 1½ spoon water; 2 pieces garlic, crushed; ½ red pepper, crushed

Cut carrot thin and put in a jar for about 24 hours (before you eat) with the vinegar mixture to pickle.
Vinegar Mixture: 1 spoon vinegar, 1 spoon water, 1½ spoon sugar salt. Put on heat. When very hot, take off heat and wait for it to cool before putting carrot in.

VIETNAMESE PORK ROLLS

Ingredients:
- 250 g pork (½ lb.)
- 1 oz. Mung bean thread
- 5 oz. dried vegetables
- 2 medium onions (or 1 large onion)
- a little salt, black pepper, sugar, monosodium glutamate
- ½ lb. rice paper

Method:
- -Put dried vegetables into cold water 2 hours before you start
- -Put bean thread into cold water 1 hour before you start
- -Wash the pork and cut it very thin
- -Cut the onion very thin too
- -Cut the bean thread into small pieces and cut the dried vegetables very thin
- -Then mix the pork with all the vegetables
- -Add the sugar, salt, pepper, MSG, and leave for about 30 minutes
- -Put a little sugar in some water and rub the rice paper with this sugar water to make the rice paper soft
- -Put a little filling on the softened rice paper and roll each one up.
- -Put a lot of oil into a pan and heat on the stove
- -When the oil is very hot, put in the rolls and cook for a few minutes. When they look a little yellow, take them out

*Serve the pork rolls hot, with fish sauce and salad.

FISH SAUCE

Ingredients:
- 2 teaspoons fish sauce
- a little vinegar
- 1 lemon
- 3 tsp. sugar
- ½ red pepper
- 2 pieces garlic
- a little water

Method: Crush the pepper and garlic. Add a little hot water, Add the lemon, sugar vinegar to fish sauce.

AGAR with SUGAR

A light gelatin-like dessert -- tasty and attractive.

Ingredient: 5 oz. Agar
150 g sugar
2 egg yolks
a little vanilla
food colouring as desired

Method:
-Wash and clean Agar
-Put the agar in cold water for about 20 minutes (1 part agar to 2½ parts cold water)
-Put in a pot on the stove and stir
-When agar is very hot, it dissolves. Then put in the sugar and it will dissolve.
-You can now divide it into different dishes and add a little food colouring -eg. red, green.
-To the mixture in the pot add the egg yolks and keep stirring. Then add a little vanilla and take off the stove.
-Pour into flat pans, ice cube trays, etc. and put in the refrigerator for 1 or two hours.
-You can use small cookie cutters to cut it into different shapes and then serve on a plate with a toothpick in each piece.

I Feel I am Living a New Life

Nuguyen, Tan Tho

I am 25 years old and I came here in April 1980. I was in my last year at Saigon University when I left Vietnam. In fact, after the communists took over South Vietnam, like many people, I had attempted to escape many times, but I had lost my money and hadn't succeeded. Fortunately I was not captured.

In May 1979 the communist regime was launching an official campaign to deport the Hoa (ethnic Chinese). My mother managed to find a place on a boat for me. I used a false paper which carried a Hoa (Chinese) name so that I could register to leave.

When the day arrived, I rode in a bus down to Vung Tau, a harbour city east of Saigon. I found hundreds of people already on the dockyard, ready to board three rebuilt fishing boats anchored there. With nine taels of gold I got a place on a boat which was 17 meters long with 300 people. It was so crowded that if you stood up for a few minutes your place would surely be occupied.

I went through many days on the sea, but finally arrived at a refugee camp. I had intended to go to the U. S. but at that time it only admitted those with relatives there. I chose to come to Canada.

I find speaking English fluently is difficult. It requires continuous effort. I studied English before, in Vietnam and now the more I study, the more awkward I feel!

I was disappointed when I first came here. I asked people who came before me about a job, but they were disappointed and many said that they would move to another province. Three months after I was here a friend of mine moved to another province and then recommended that I take his job.

I live here with a friend in a basement. A Vietnamese family of five -- two parents and 3 children live upstairs, and we share the rent.

At present I am not thinking of marriage. I am working hard to support myself and I want to go back to an Institute of Technology. But Canada is unlike Vietnam where the man is the main support of the family, and women usually help around in the family. I perceive that in an industrial country like Canada, both husband and wife work to support the family. If I meet the right person I will marry.

In my leisure time I do some reading, and watch television, visit friends, or find a place to play ping pong (table tennis).

I was brought up in a family influenced by Confucianism. Like many Vietnamese families we have an ancestor's altar in our house. There is a main altar for all the ancestors of the family and there may be a small altar beside that for the memorial days and the festivals of New Year, Full Moon Festival and so on. The importance of ancestor worship is that the decendants show their respect towards their ancestors. I believe this is a good custom for the offspring to remember their ancestors and where they come from. Confucian teachings and ancestor worship are fading in our generation. Vietnamese families here don't have the facilities to set up an ancestor altar. They manage to set up a simple altar, with a can for incense sticks and two small red lamps that replace candles placed before an image of their ancestors or the Goddess of Mercy.

I am constantly writing to my parents, brother and sisters back home and sending money, medicine and clothes to them.

I think my family and my extended family emphasized a family education that prevented their children from becoming bad. For example: my father would not allow his grown-up daughter to go out after 8 o'clock. Is he very strict? Boys have more free time when they grow up they

know how to conduct themselves.

After coming here, and escaping from the communists, I don't worry much about the future, I think all we have to do to be well-established here is to be diligent. If one doesn't want to do a general labour job all your life, there are chances to study a trade and get a better job. Having succeeded in coming here, I feel I am living a new life.

This is a Good Place to Live

Thai, Ky

Actually I am 26 years old now but in the refugee camp somebody make a mistake by marking my year of birth as 1957 instead od 1955. I have been here for four months.

I am from the city of Haiphong, North Vietnam. After the communists took over, father had to close his small business and go to work at a cement factory. My mother had commuted between different regions of the country and was engaged in trading. Although North Vietnam had been a communist country for twenty years, many Chinese still made their living by trading. Of course it was not allowed by the communist regime, but we always found ways to trade privately to earn our living.

The community where we were growing up was predominantly Chinese. Very often we Chinese were denied vocational training, so after graduation from high school I went to work in a dockyard, I worked there until I left Vietnam.

My wife and I were married in Hong Kong when we stayed in the refugee camp. We were classmates in Vietnam and we left in the same boat. She came to Canada before me and is living in Port Hood. She is sponsored by a church there.

When China and Vietnam came to conflict in 1978 we were informed that all Chinese who have been in Vietnam for less than three generations would have to register and leave the country. If you didn't leave, you would be sent to a New Economic Zone.

One sister, one brother and I left Vietnam in the middle of 1979 and stayed 20 months in a Hong Kong refugee camp. One year after we left, the rest of my family, my grandmother, parents, and two younger sisters left, but their boat was wrecked off China's coast so now they stay in China. I just got information about them almost two years after we were separated.

People in North Vietnam, which has been dominated by the communist regime for many years, have always been eager to leave the country. That is natural for people who live under continual suppression.

North Vietnam has been a poor country, ever since the communists took over in 1955. They have not made any economic progress nor have they increased the standard of living for people. The communist cadres are only good at boasting that every one is motivated to work as hard as two, but they never do anything to benefit people.

I have made progress in my English since I came here. We are in contact with Canadians in school and the work place. Back home, neighbours are like an extended family; we see and chat with everybody every day. I can't find these things in my new home here. There are two Canadian neighbors downstairs, but I have just seen them twice since I have lived there.

I am studying English in Chebucto English School and working part-time in a restaurant. I plan to take a welding course after completing my English language course. My sister wishes to work as a seamstress. Some of my people have moved to bigger cities. I think it does not make much difference to live here or in a bigger city. This is a good place to live if you can find a job.

Thai Pirates

Tran, Phi

I was born in Peru. When I was three years old, my whole family returned to China. My uncle was the one person who stayed in Peru. We left China for Vietnam in 1940 due to the war. We lived in Cholon beside Saigon. When I first came to Vietnam, I did every kind of job, mainly restaurant work, like many newcomers working here now, but later on I got my job as a deliverer and I went through all the provinces. I worked until the communists took over. Then I went to a "New Economic Zone" as a pioneer farmer where we did the plowing in the forest for a while but we couldn't harvest, and so we were looking for ways to leave the country. At first we planned to let our daughter and son leave, but finally we reached the refugee camp earlier than they did and since I was a captain before (in 1944) I could sail a boat. I had sailed everywhere, Japan, Australia, France and South Africa. In our flight from Vietnam, I took charge of operating the boat.

I have five children, two daughters and three sons. Now in Canada I just have one son, one daughter and her husband, and the rest of them are in Vietnam. I want to sponsor them but I don't have the financial ability yet.

We were sponsored by a church. Now, I only work at a part-time job and have been looking for a full-time job, but finding a job is difficult. My wife and I go to work and have an income of five hundred and thirty dollars a month. After I pay the rent, bus fare, power, telephone and groceries, I have no money left.

When we were in Vietnam we often went to the temple twice a month, and on some other important festivals. Since I came to Canada I go to the church every Sunday. I think every religion is alike, and teaches people to behave in a good way. We still practice our ancestral worship, and we eat vegetarian meals twice a month. We follow our Chinese traditions which have existed for thousands of years. Because our ancestors came before us we must have allegiance to them.

I left Vietnam in March 1979. We were attacked by Thai pirates seven times, and my daughter's boat was robbed by Thai pirates thirty six times. The boat floated on the sea for one month, because the pirates took the engine from the boat. At last we arrived in the Malaysian Bidong refugee camp on April 5, 1979. We stayed in the refugee camp for six months.

We left the refugee camp for Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian capital, on October 13, 1979 and continued our trip to Canada on December 17, 1979. We settled in the province of Nova Scotia. After we came our sponsor arranged a job for me. I have had this part-time job ever since I was in the Manpower Training course. I am bored with this job. My wife is working too. My daughter lives around here so that in the day time, when her husband goes to work my daughter takes her son to my place. In the evening she goes back to her apartment, and prepares dinner for her husband when he comes back from work. In our family we do not speak English and are rarely in touch with Canadians, but my daughter can speak some English. When my sponsor comes to visit us only she can speak with my sponsor. She wants to continue to study English but she can't because she has a baby.

Since we left the Manpower English training course, we don't study any more. At home we speak our own language, therefore we do not have many chances to practise English.

We Still Worship Our Ancestors

Tran, Tony

I am 34 years old, I came here with my wife and four children, the oldest one is a 10 year-old boy, the youngest is a 4 year-old girl.

I grew up in the Chinese city of Cholon beside Saigon. I left school when I was 15 years old and started to help my father around his small weaving shop. This is a small light industry. I learned the trade, and gradually succeeded in my father's shop and ran the business myself.

Since my shop was a small handicraft business, we could continue our operation after the communists came. Although material was running short we managed to keep running our business and make a living.

There was a movement to leave the country in 1979. Our neighbors and relatives registered to pay taels of golds to buy space in crowded boats to leave the country. So many people were leaving or looking for ways to leave, I felt insecure to be left alone. So I also attempted to contact an agent to find a place for my family.

Like many other boats which carried our people leaving the country at that time, we were attacked by Thai pirates. They robbed us of our belongings. Our boat arrived on the Malaysian coast on the fourth day and then was towed away by the Malaysian navy to Indonesia, because the Malaysians would not take any more refugees at that time.

We stayed in a refugee camp in Indonesia for 9 months and then came to Canada. Today I have been in Canada for one year. I was sponsored by St. Agnes Church. They welcomed me at the airport and took us to this house which was already rented and decorated for us. They had arranged everthing for us including food in the refrigerator.

The church people are good and enthusiastic, they took

care of us in everything. They arranged for us to see the dentist and came to see us and buy toys and candy for our children. Now if I need help, I just call them and they will come.

We go to the church on some Sundays. I was educated in a Christian school, so I understand Christanity though my English is not good enough to understand what the priest says in the church.

We still worship our ancestors at New Year and at important festivals during the year. We haven't set up an ancestral altar as we did back home, we just burn several incense sticks and offer fruit and food to show our remembrance.

English is difficult for me, due to my age, I forget easily. If I could remember everything I learned during my 8 months Manpower training course, I would be very good. I seldom use English in my work.

Our children are doing well in English. They are playing and have more contact with Canadian children in the neighborhood and school. In home we speak Taokian, a Chinese dialect and we teach our children according to Chinese traditional values.

I am working in a fish plant and I am rather satisfied with my job. The Church still supports us somewhat. My wife has a job now, she is a chambermaid in a hotel.

On the weekend, we usually have some friends in our house. We play Chinese chess, drink tea, and read Chinese newspapers.

Businessmen lived with terror

Tran, Trach Khanh

Mr. Tran

I was educated in a Chinese school in Vietnam, then went to Taiwan to study chemical engineering. After graduating, I returned to Vietnam and was employed in a textile company. After I had worked there for four years, the factory was heavily damaged by the 1968 Tet attack. It needed to be rebuilt. The company needed a person who knew about machines as well as the manufacturing process so I was shifted to the maintenance department.

In 1971 I left the textile company and I established a soy bean sauce factory myself. Previously my father had produced soy bean sauce in his small factory. I ran my factory until 1979 when I left the country.

Why did I leave? Because in Vietnam after the communists came, the way of life was not fit to live. Secondly, there are no human rights under a communist regime.

The important element of life is to be able to do the things we like, at least in our leisure time, but the Vietnamese communists won't let you do so. With them one doesn't have human rights, they alway mouth ideal slogans but, for many years, they haven't had any results. So the way of life and the political regime are not fit for us.

Furthermore, the way they educate the next generation, won't permit children to freely develop their intelligence. To be more exact, they are fooling the people. So, the development of children is restricted, and their prospects are gloomy.

In Vietnam we businessmen always lived with terror and were always frightened that something would happen, tonight or tomorrow, to your house, or to your family.

In 1978 there was a campaign to illegally confiscate

the property of the businessmen. The secret police tailed my sons when they went to school to see if they sold any possessions.

The society there is in chaos. One has no hope for the future. The communist doctrine of class struggle wants the society to always change. It was not fair for us and for our children to be there, so we had to leave. We left not only because of our livelihoods, as we still could make a living there, but our life was meaningless.

Mrs. Tran

It was so terrible. The communists want to control one's actions, one's thoughts.

When we boarded the boat, we had only two thoughts: either we would arrive safely, at an uncertain destination, or we would be lost, a 50 percent chance. At least by risking my life, I had the hope that I would arrive safely and rebuild my life. If I stayed in Vietnam I would forever have no hope. I would become dull, give up my identity, my way.

I had been working in many professions in Vietnam, such as in the textile factory, in a chemical lab., helping in the photo processing room. After marriage I helped my husband in our soy bean sauce factory.

After coming here, we can't find employment in our profession, we can't use our skills because we don't have a Canadian background, and we have some difficulty in English.

Vietnam, for many Canadians I have met, is a far away place. Perhaps due to the Vietnam war, it became a little more known, but how can Canadians know of our education level?

Mr. Tran

Now I work as a machinist, although I do not hold a licence. Only our factory recognizes us and gave me a job as a machinist.

I have applied to many places in Nova Scotia as a professional engineer, for example: the High Liner plant, the heavy water plant, and Michelin Tire Canada Ltd, but I still can't practice my profession.

Previously I was not experienced as a machinist. But when I worked in the textile company in Vietnam I got some experience with machines, theory, not practice.

It is difficult to say whether we encounter discrimination here. In the community sometimes we were embarrassed, we said "Hello" to people in the community but we got no response. The people that our sponsors have introduced us to are good to us. Maybe some people have the thought, "I don't know you, so why do you say "Hello" to me?"

I have been here for 18 months. We do not have a close neighborhood as we used to have in Vietnam. Maybe this is because here we have more open spaces with fewer people. Neighbors rarely come and go.

Mrs. Tran

You see, look out this side, you'll find no people, the other side you can't find people either. In addition everybody has his work, they don't have much time.

The way of life is so different from our way of life before. We remember in Vietnam where we had many friends we would visit each other more frequently. Several families would go out and entertain together, barbecue and so on, and friendship was much closer. I have not found this kind of friendship in my new life here yet.

Here, if people want to come to your home, they will call you first, if they fail to call you before they come they would feel sorry to interrupt you.

In Vietnam we would drop in to see friends at any time, without prior notice. If one's friend is not home that is all right.

Here friendship is rather more formal, or maybe there are good friendships between people and we don't know about them.

Of course when my children grow up they will be better than us in the sense of adapting to the Canadian way of life, and culture. We, this generation, are still attached to our homeland, and we are rooted in Chinese culture.

My daughter can only write her Chinese name. At home I speak Chinese to her. Sometimes she has to use English expressions, since she does not have friends in our ethnic group. For the two older children I give them some Chinese books to read, and hope that they will know more Chinese. In this world to know more than one language will be an advantage.

My children like school here very much. Schools here are good. The teachers take care of them, and develop the child's personality. At first of course their English was poor, but their teachers have been patient, step by step they intensively tutored them individually. Now they can keep up with their classmates in English. They do better in mathematics. My daughter is in grade one but her reading level is grade six.

Maybe my children have undergone too much suffering. They experienced hardship in their young lives, for example the flight and the refugee camp. All of these have made them more mature than their real age. They feel very happy being here.

My daughter participated in school Brownies, and when she was asked to draw wildlife she drew the boat and the scene of the Malaysia coast where we landed. This shows that she can't forget it. Her Brownie instructor was amazed when she drew that picture.

So we are here, and at last we can live our lives peacefully and quietly.

Xia and li are great virtues

Truong, Van Phat

I was born in 1927 in Guandong, China. When I was three years old my father took me to Vietnam, where he had gone for business reasons.

After graduating from Chinese high school, I taught for five years. Then I went to Taiwan to study Chinese literature in Taiwan Normal University. I graduated and returned to Vietnam.

But I did not chose teaching as my career, instead I opened a bakery in Long-Xuyen, a city in Mekong Delta. In 1967 the bakery was changed to a more modern one and business expanded so that finally I had three of them. I was a general agent for flour, sugar, and condensed milk in Long-Xuyen province plus manager of Chinese affairs in the Tin-Nighia Bank. The Long-Xuyen Chinese school asked me to be its president. In 1972, I opened a company, a rice mill. I was also the president of a Chinese alumi association.

I remember the day the communists took over, I did not think that it would come so soon. I wanted to send my daughter abroad on April 29th., 1975, on a flight back to Taiwan but the Tan Son Nhat airport was raided on the night before and she could not leave. Then came liberation, and I did not want to go back to Long-Xuyen. I intended to stay in Saigon. I was surprised that the principal of that Chinese school of which I was president was a communist agent. A friend of mine and his wife whom I had trusted and recommended to teach in our school were also communist agents which was beyond my imagination. They sent a delegation to see me and ask me to officially to hand over that school to the communist regime. I thought it made no difference, it was taken anyway. There was no need for an official ceremony. I drove back to Long-Xuyen anyway. That night they invited me to a friend's house and during the meeting two communist agents entered who asked me to go back to my house with them.

As soon as we entered the house I heard shouting! "Hands up". I was astonished to learn that he meant me. So more than 20 communist agents had come to raid my house (He read document, accusing me with his hand shaking. I felt pity for him).

From 8 o'clock to 12 p.m., they searched every corner of the house. They took all my property. I was put in jail for one and one-half years.

The people that the communists wanted to arrest were: first capitalists, second the people with social standing, third those with positions, that is community leaders, forth intellectuals, and I fitted in all four categories. I knew that but I failed to guess that liberation would come soon.

In mid 1978 the Viet Cong started to allow the Chinese to go abroad. We bought a boat, took my family and with more than two hundred other people and set sail. That was October of 1978, when the weather was very bad. The boat started at 10 am, but by night we ran into big waves, and a heavy storm. We had four sailors but not one of them had experience with navigation. Heavy waves and strong winds attacked the boat so much that the sailors changed direction, the boat was stranded but we were not aware of it. Another great wave overturned the boat. We had a limited number of life boats. Everybody tried to get into a life boat but not many of us could. That night several survivers floated on the high sea. We floated to a deserted island at 12 p.m. When we counted, we found we had ninety survivors out of more than two hundred. My wife, a son and a daughter lost their lives at sea.

The next day we were taken back to the Vietnamese mainland. Eighty survivors were gradually sent back to the sea in the other boats. However, my family and some friends were still on the mainland and in May 1979 we took another boat to try again. First, when we arrived in Malaysia we disembarked and we were surrounded by the Malaysian police and the army. After negotiations they let us set up tents, and supplied us with food. Two months later, they ordered us to leave. We had used wood from the boat to make tents, and

beds to sleep on. The boat originally had a double deck, now it had one floor left, and the passengers could not jam in it anymore. We divided into two groups, each group having three hundred people. We agreed that if the first group arrived at a destination, they would return and take the second group. If we were towed to sea nobody knew what his fate would be.

We knew that when we were towed to sea, it was to Pulau Tanga, this is another province. This first province didn't want to take us so they passed on their responsibility. We sailed towards an island but we were fired on by machine guns. While we were stopped in the water, somebody came out to us and asked us to stay where we were and not to get closer. They promised to supply us with food and water. We were running out of food, and water, and the children were screaming with hunger. For a night and one day we didn't see anybody coming out, and after discussion, we decided to disembark ourselves. We would make for the beach and unload the people on the beach.

We were put in the playground of a Chinese school with 2,000 other refugees. Some indigenous Malaysians treated us very badly. Some children ran out to the stores across the street. If they were caught by the Malaysians, they would beat the children. Once they beat a young man until he bled, but they still did not stop. The Malaysian government did not want their people to treat us like that.

After staying there for two months again they ordered us back on board. We had two engines, but only one was still working. They forced us on board, and one navy ship towed us toward the sea. I remember that night there was a dark heavy rain, with strong winds. They took four girls as hostages. If we didn't do what they ordered us to they would shoot the girls. The waves and winds were so strong that they could not take their ship beside us to re-board the girls. The first time they crashed into our boat, and we thought the boat would sink. Fortunately, it did not. The second time they threw the four girls into the boat, then they left us adrift on the sea.

We ran about two hours, the engine that still worked then stopped too. Alas! Strong winds, heavy rain, big waves and a small boat with 300 people afloat on the high, vast sea. Women, children screamed, prayed, cried. We thought it was going to sink. Fortunately, three hours later, the storm disappeared. We started the engine but we couldn't proceed. The waves were so big that it pushed us back. We ran all night but still stayed in the same place. At dawn we saw an island in the horizon. We raced towards it. It took us 12 hours to get to it and it was a distance that usually took three hours.

Again, we were not allowed to land, but after some arrangements, we were allowed to land the next day. We did not get supplies of food there. The third day a sail boat with an American flag ran by. We shouted, waved clothes, did everything to get their attention. Although they did not stop, maybe they had radio equipment and communicated with a land station, as the second day a Malaysian Red Cross ship came and brought us some food. They told us to wreck the ship after arriving in Malaysia. "If you do not wreck it, you will be sent out to the sea again" said one Red Cross worker. So we wrecked the boat. Then on December 23rd, Malaysian Independence Day, they dispatched a Navy ship to take us to Pulau Tanga Refugee camp where we officially got refugee status. After getting the refugee status, the Canadian delegate was the first one who came to interview us. Our family consisted of eighteen people, my wife, children, my brother's family and several relatives. Three people settled in Toronto, the rest (fifteen people) settled in Halifax.

I was sponsored by a Catholic church parish, and they are very good towards us. They deposited some money in the bank for us to pay the rent, and bought groceries while we studied English. Six sponsors in turn came to see us frequently. One took the children to the doctor, another took us to get groceries, one to the dentist, and so on.

After finishing English classes I went to work in two fish plants and remain there. I can save money because the parish still supports us.

If I reminisce now I become very sad. I have undergone two disasters. One was concerning my business, and property, the second was the boat was sunk. However I am still open minded.

I dare not think of all of these things again. In Vietnam many people committed suicide after their property was taken away by the communists. I take all the past things as a dream. We work now for our children. I would not compare our life here with the past, it cannot be compared.

As I am of Chinese origin, I feel that the Chinese family life is different from foreigners', especially concerning family education. In a Chinese family, the younger members must respect the elders. There is a one thousand years' Chinese virtue of filial piety. In a foreign country, family education places stress on equality, and the youngest call older people by their first name. In a Chinese family, people have special terms for their elders, depending on the relationship. Here education stresses equality.

Younger members must keep their Chinese culture, customs and courtesy. Of course, for a while we will be somewhat assimilated.

Though in the extent of our life we can keep our culture, we would like to learn the advantages and virtue of other cultures. I would like my children to do so. At present in regard to the western culture, there is excessive freedom, but our children haven't learned that.

Sometimes there is a problem in the way people educate their children. Canadian eduction stresses personality development. In some way Canadian behaviour seems polite; for instance if the children get something for their dad or mom, the parents would say a thank you, and they will ask for an errand or favor. They seem very polite towards children. We Chinese wouldn't say that kind of thing to our children, we just said "get me a cup of tea" that is all.

In one sense Canadians are very polite, in another sense our Chinese way of politeness is special, real and natural. I feel western ways are more superficial. Or maybe we all regard politeness as a virtue but we all show it in a different way. Canadians so not show respect to elders as much as Chinese.

For me, the Chinese words of "Xia" (filial pity) and "li" (courtesy) are the two Chinese great virtues. The reason the Chinese still retain their culture for five thousand years is because of such virtues.

For religion, my family has two beliefs. My wife is Catholic and my children all follow her but I believe in Buddhism. We definitely have freedom. On Sunday I go to church with them, but coming home, I recite my prayers and I have my own beliefs. I think all religions have their own values. The way the Buddhists depend for their soul on Buddha is the same as the Christians seeking refuge in the soul of Jesus Christ. The objective is the same. Whatever religion one has involves seeking refuge for the soul and spirit. The methods may vary but the end is the same.

I Teach My Grandparents English

Troung, Xuong

I was born in China. When I was four years old I went to North Vietnam.

I lived in Quang-Ninh Province, Thien An district where we had our own house, and a barber shop which belonged to the co-operative society. We could take seventy percent of the profits and the government took thirty percent. In my district there was just one barber shop, so I had to participate in the co-operative society.

When Ho Chi Minh was still alive, we had some freedom, but after he died there was more oppression. We were not allowed to learn Chinese. The authorities changed all the district chiefs - they changed anything that they felt like changing.

There were many Chinese in the area where I lived, and there were only a few Communist party members' families. There were almost seven thousand Chinese people, and when there was the campaign to expell the Chinese, nearly everybody left.

If you left and the Communists knew you were well off, they would confiscate all your property. Since they knew that I was only a barber, they didn't bother to persecute my family. We left our country in 1979. We went from Quang-Ninh to Hai-Phong and from there we took a boat. On our way from Vietnam to Hong Kong we had not enough water and food. There had been many difficulties for older people and babies. Finally we arrived in Hong Kong and stayed there for eight months before coming to Canada.

We came here, the Canadians treated us well, but we couldn't talk with them, poor us! Sometimes, I felt sad, I just went to work and came back home, and had no friends to talk with. The big problem is English, I am old now and it is hard to study. We study English, and listen to tapes

but when we converse with some other people, they don't understand and also we forget easily.

*
Yien: My name is Yien Truong, I've forgotten what it was like when I was in Vietnam, I remember my friend in Hong Kong but I forget her name. I talk with my grandparents sometimes. I can speak a little bit of Cantonese.

*
Lien: I am seven years old. I go to school in the same class as my sister. I like my school and teacher, I teach my grandparents English, but I can't translate for them. Tomorrow is Saturday. I'll stay home, and Sunday will be Father's Day, I made some cards for my father, because my father taught me and told me what's wrong and what's bad, that's why we made some cards for him. Sometimes he goes to the store and buys some candies and cookies for us. He tells us when we cross the street, we must be careful of the cars, not to walk in the road, because the cars might come. Make sure you watch for cars, that's all the things my father taught us.

We would like to keep going to school, we don't want to stop it, because when we go to school we have fun, and sometimes in the school we have movies to watch. After the movie we want to play outside, and we have to ask our teacher. If they allow us then we can go. That's why I like it.

My classmates know I am a Chinese. They asked me to sing a Chinese song for them, but I don't like to. Why? Because I don't want to.

My mother was a Chinese teacher, she taught me how to sing Chinese songs. Every Monday I sing a Canadian song, when we have music class.

*Yien and Lien are the granddaughters.

I will work to sponsor my relatives

Vuong, Cuong

From China my parents fled the Japanese to Vietnam in 1945. They settled in the province of Quang Ninh, North Vietnam. Starting from scratch, my parents worked hard and gradually they had a restaurant. I was born in 1947. I had been helping around the restaurant since I was a child. I could skillfully prepare feasts for hundreds of people. I graduated from high school in North Vietnam where we Chinese had little chance to continue our education at higher levels. I turned to study sailing for three years then I took service for one year in a ship.

Since we still retained our Chinese identity, we never participated in Vietnamese communist political activities. I was asked to take out Vietnamese citizenship if I wanted to keep my job. I said I was Chinese, not Kinh (ethnic Vietnamese people). I would never take out Vietnamese citizenship. Then I lost the job.

My father's restaurant was taken over by the communists as part of a socialist reform in 1966. I came back from being at sea and they let me travel and do my own business if the restaurant was not busy.

As I had friends everywhere, I ran a free market for money. In communist North Vietnam to make your living, one had to do many things that were basically illegal according to communist rules. We didn't murder, or steal, we were just doing business to earn our living.

There is nothing shameful in that. With some friends, I travelled to different parts of the country acting as a go-between for people on a co-operative farm, helping them get the medicine or other products that they needed. I made my living in this way and sometimes made a lot of money. One could not depend on a salary for a living.

I was paid 50 piastres for my job as a cook but I had

to spend more than 100 piastres for cigarettes. They wanted me to stay on permanently, but I did not like it.

I got married in 1971, and my wife mainly stayed at home, but sometimes she helped at the near-by day care centre.

We had to keep a good, cautious relationship with the communist customs officials and public security agents. One had to be good towards them otherwise they could cause trouble and have you put in jail. We used to buy them drinks and give them money.

Generally Chinese in North Vietnam were well off. Few people were really poor compared to the living standards there. Though the North Vietnam communists had long been making efforts to assimilate the Chinese, less and less Chinese language was taught in school. There had not been much serious discrimination against those who were of Chinese origin, but in 1977 the government policy apparently changed. Party members and officers with Chinese origins were not trusted. Many Chinese lost their jobs, for example: my nephew who is with me now, was a truck driver but was assigned to collect garbage.

I had a Chinese friend who was a senior official in the communist government. When talking together we sensed that the Chinese in Vietnam might be treated unfairly, perhaps in the same way as Indonesian Chinese, who were persecuted and expelled by the thousands in 1965.

Next came the currency reform trick. Thousands of dollars became waste paper. Every adult could only redeem 200 piastres of the new currency, children 50 piastres.

On May 3, 1978 ten days after the currency change, we left Vietnam in a fifteen ton boat run by sail. It was filled with 55 people, the trip was miserable. We were on the sea for forty days, a trip that would normally take two days.

There were two old women seventy-two years old, and my youngest son only one month old, I thought he would die. Thank God he was all right.

Along the way we stopped from time to time along the Chinese coast to get water, food and seek sanctuary from typhoons. I myself took charge of running the boat day and night.

I arrived in Canada August 9, 1979 almost one and a half years ago now. My English is still very poor.

I got my first job washing dishes as soon as I came here, and kept it until March, 1980. I wanted to find another job other than washing dishes. So they asked me what I did in Vietnam and I said my family ran a restaurant in Vietnam. I was asked if I knew how to cook and bake. I said I knew a little, not very much. (Nobody would say that he himself was excellent.) Then I got my present job as a cook.

Am I satisfied with my work? Within our circumstances and our education it is hard to find another job that fits our hopes and salary expectations.

Now our life is fairly secure. You could say I make enough money for a living, and in a sense that is true, but I have to be careful and save. I myself work to support four children and my three nephews who also live with me. There was no welfare in Vietnam but I could feed my family there without working for several months. It cannot be that way here.

This is a good country, a good place, I don't want to move somewhere else nor do I want to go back. I will work hard to re-establish myself and sponsor my relatives still in Vietnam.

Conclusion

The total cost of the refugee program that brought 60,000 refugees from Indochina to Canada is estimated at about $190 million, which is about $3,100 each. The breakdown of the shared costs is about $120 million federal funds, $50 million provincial funds, and about $40 million from private donations. The expense of the program seems high, and the figures given here do not include the extra amounts that may have been given by private individuals, and not recorded.

WAS CANADA'S EFFORT A SIGNIFICANT ONE?

As mentioned previously, Canada took in more Indochinese refugees per capita than any other country of the world. Its response was therefore the most generous, if not the highest real figure.

WAS THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROGRAM TOO EXPENSIVE?

The financial investment of $190 million will be regained through income taxes in only two years if 40 per cent of the refugees gain employment at jobs with incomes of $10,000 per year. Although most Indochinese in Nova Scotia are underemployed, more than 90% of those eligible to work have some form of employment.

DID THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROGRAM CONTRIBUTE TO OVERCROWDING IN CANADA?

In terms of population growth: Canada could allow an immigration of 130,000 per year, including 30,000 refugees, and still maintain a zero population growth. This is because

Canada loses about 75,000 people per year in emigration and it has a low natural population increase. The fertility rate is actually less than replacement, 1.9 per female, so Canada needs immigration to keep the population figure from declining.

THE REFUGEE SITUATION NOW

For the fiscal year ending in March 1982, Canada contributed $26.7 million to humanitary and emergency relief. This included U.N. relief programs in Palestine, Nambia and an education program in southern Africa, plus emergency relief programs in Djibouti, Uganda, Angola, Zaire, Chad, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, and Kampuchea- Thailand.

Applicants for refugee status in 1981 have been accepted from 11 countries including Chili, El Salvadore, Poland, Iran, Czechoslovakia, Argentina, and Cuba.

The estimated refugees in the world total about 13.6 million for 1981, including about 5 million in Africa, 4 million others in the Middle East and North Africa, 2.5 million in Asia, 2 million in Latin America and the Carribean, and 100,000 in Eastern Europe. ("Who is my Neighbour", Inter-Church Committee for Refugees, 1981.)

THE CANADIAN REFUGEE PROGRAM, 1981 IS AS FOLLOWS:

Africa	200	
Indochina	8,000	
Latin America	1,000	total 16,000
Eastern Europe	4,000	
Other	300	
Contingency reserve	2,500	

The projected number of private sponsorships for 1981 was 5,000. The federal government has decided to support and encourage private organizations in their humanitarian efforts to relieve suffering refugees.

In 1982 Canada's quota for Indochinese refugees was cut in half to 4,000 from the 1981 figure of 8,000, not including private sponsorships. (As of April 30, 1982, there were about 220,113 Indochinese refugees in camps throughout the world, not including those in camps in Indonesia and the Philippines. The largest group was in Thailand, 186,451 people. (*U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees).

Overall, the Canadian response to the Indochinese refugee problems was highly generous. The government programs expanded as the problems became more apparent and it developed the private sponsorship program when the usual government programs seemed inadequate. The humanitarian response of the Canadian people through the private sponsorship program is a credit to the nation.

In the light of the emmense world refugee problem, Canadians must continue their generousity and humanitarism. It will be heartening to remember that the Indochinese refugee program was a success when Canadians are again called on to help the more unfortunate of the world.

By Marcel Guay,
Editor.

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Refugee Resettlement: Abstracts

The International Refugee Integration Resource Centre (IRIRC), a new joint project of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, and the International Committee for Migration, has published its first isssue of Refugee Abstracts, a quarterly providing summaries of significant books, journals, reports and projects dealing with refugee resettlement worldwide.

IRIC
13, rue Gautier
1201 Geneva
Switzerland

The Standing Conference of Canadian Organizations Concerned For Refugees

1982 Refugee Consultation
Friday, June 18 - Sunday, June 20, 1982

Redemptionist Centre
Aylmer, Quebec (near Ottawa)

For more information contact:
The Standing Conference of Canadian Organizations Concerned for Refugees
1857 de Maisonneuve Ouest
Montreal, Quebec
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(514) 937-5351

Indochinese Refugees: The Canadian Response, 1979 & 1980

Employment and Immigration Canada has published a summary of the Indochinese refugee resettlement movement in Canada, focussing on the federal government's involvement. The report is most valuable for its statistical summary of the movement from January 1, 1979 to December 31, 1980, with

breakdowns by age, sex, area of settlement, educational level, occupation, government expenditures, etc. Available from:
Distribution Unit
Public Affairs Division
Employment & Immigration Canada
12th Floor, Phase IV
Place du Portage
Hull, Quebec
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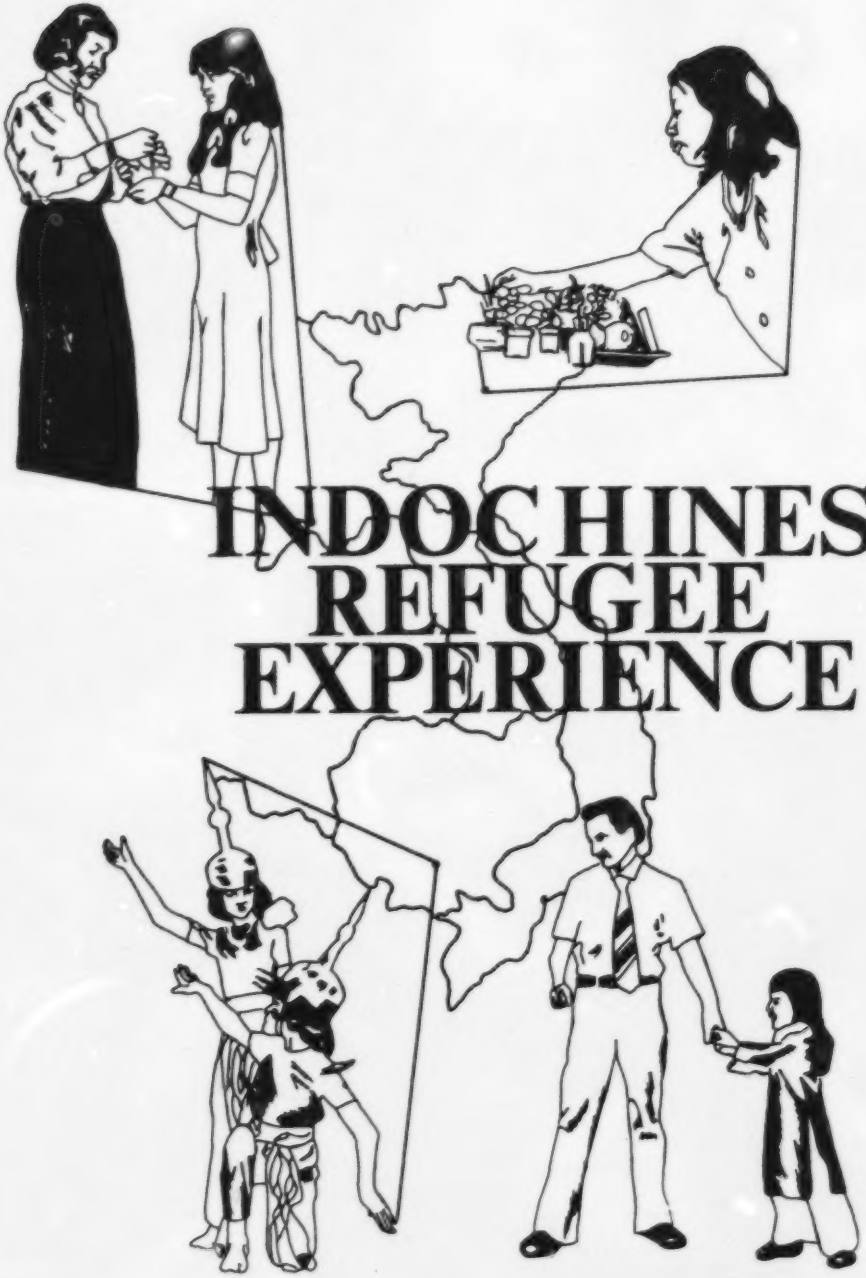

INDOCHINESE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE